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PLAYBOY

Survivors DESERVE *Good Sex,* TOO

As the cultural dialogue around sex ed evolves, people are demanding sex education that encompasses all experiences—even the violent, traumatizing ones. The rise of the #MeToo movement has brought about a new cultural narrative surrounding how we discuss sexual violence, but when survivors seek support to reintegrate pleasure and sex in their lives, who is capable of best supporting them?

So much of the conversation around survivors excludes pleasure. A group of trauma-focused sex educators are working to change that.

That's where trauma-informed sexuality professionals come in.

Being a trauma-informed sexuality professional is an incredibly vital niche within the field and one that a growing number of professionals are embracing. But what does that balance of self-care and caring for others—especially in such a heavy niche—actually look like? I spoke with two trauma-informed sexuality professionals about their work, and why survivors of violence need sexuality professionals to support them.

What does it mean to be a trauma-informed sexuality professional?

For Sarah Brynn Holliday, a sexuality speaker and writer who works with survivors on healing and pleasure after trauma, it is understanding there are many ways trauma can affect sex and pleasure. "We're often led to believe sexual violence is the sole trauma that impacts our relationships with our bodies, our sexualities, ourselves and our partners, but trauma is broad," Holliday says.

"Chronic illness, death of a loved one or an abuser, pregnancy loss, religious trauma, systemic and historical violence and oppression, mass trauma, and generational trauma all have an effect on how we experience sex and pleasure," Holliday explains. "Being a trauma-informed sexuality professional means creating and facilitating space for survivors to explore those complexities and intricacies of trauma—and what it means to heal."

Janis Luna, a sex work–affirming

BY **CAMERON GLOVER** PHOTO BY **R KORPA / DANIEL FARÒ**

therapist and sex educator, carries much of this into her practice.

"Being trauma-informed is two-fold," Luna says. "First, it means I have the responsibility to keep educating myself about trauma from multiple perspectives. Trauma is not just isolated incidents of violence. Intergenerational trauma is not only a biological phenomenon, but also has deep roots in history and culture. Practicing in the United States as a social worker means I have an ethical responsibility to make an ongoing study of the historical and social context of intergenerational trauma within the specific white supremacist history of the United States."

"The second part of being trauma-informed involves not only having a basis of professional knowledge around trauma, but also not trying to impose that on my clients because it fits into my schema of what trauma is, based on my education or supposed 'expertise,'" Luna says. "The most important part of being trauma-informed is being able to meet my clients where they are in their understanding of their trauma, and holding space with them rather than trying to impose my own agenda or change them."

What's a major misconception people have about being a trauma-informed sexuality professional?

"There are two that come to mind," Holliday says. "First, that survivors have to adhere to the 'good survivor' narrative: the expectation that survivors must be calm, silent, agreeable and forgiving—that we can never be angry or set boundaries."

"The second is balancing my own status as a survivor of multiple traumas while working with other survivors," Holliday continues. "I often field messages from people looking for support, resources or just someone to talk to. I want to offer as much help as I can, but there are some days when I can't bear putting my pain on display. Many trauma-informed educators find their way to this field because they're survivors themselves—it can be tricky navigating supporting our communities and taking care of ourselves."

"People think I magically fix people, or that I make trauma go away," Luna says. "But from what I know from my own experiences of trauma and from my deepening understanding of trauma and healing from nonwhite perspectives, trauma doesn't magically disappear. Trauma is a shapeshifter."

"When I think of working with trauma, I think of the idea of integration more than fixing," Luna explains. "How can we integrate our painful experiences into our lives in a way that allows us to feel whole and centered in the fullness of who we are? How can we make space for our trauma? How can we claim space for our joy and our pleasure? How can we be aware of our relationship to our trauma and be intentional with it? A lot of it has to do with courage and self-awareness, so those are values I bring into my work."

In such an intense niche, it's important that professionals make time to center their own self-care. What does that look like?

Holliday's self-care includes both therapy and hobbies. "I try to be as gentle with myself as possible and set limits on how much I work on trauma-focused projects each day," Holliday says. "Horror novels, symphonic metal and taking walks around town also help me clear my head."

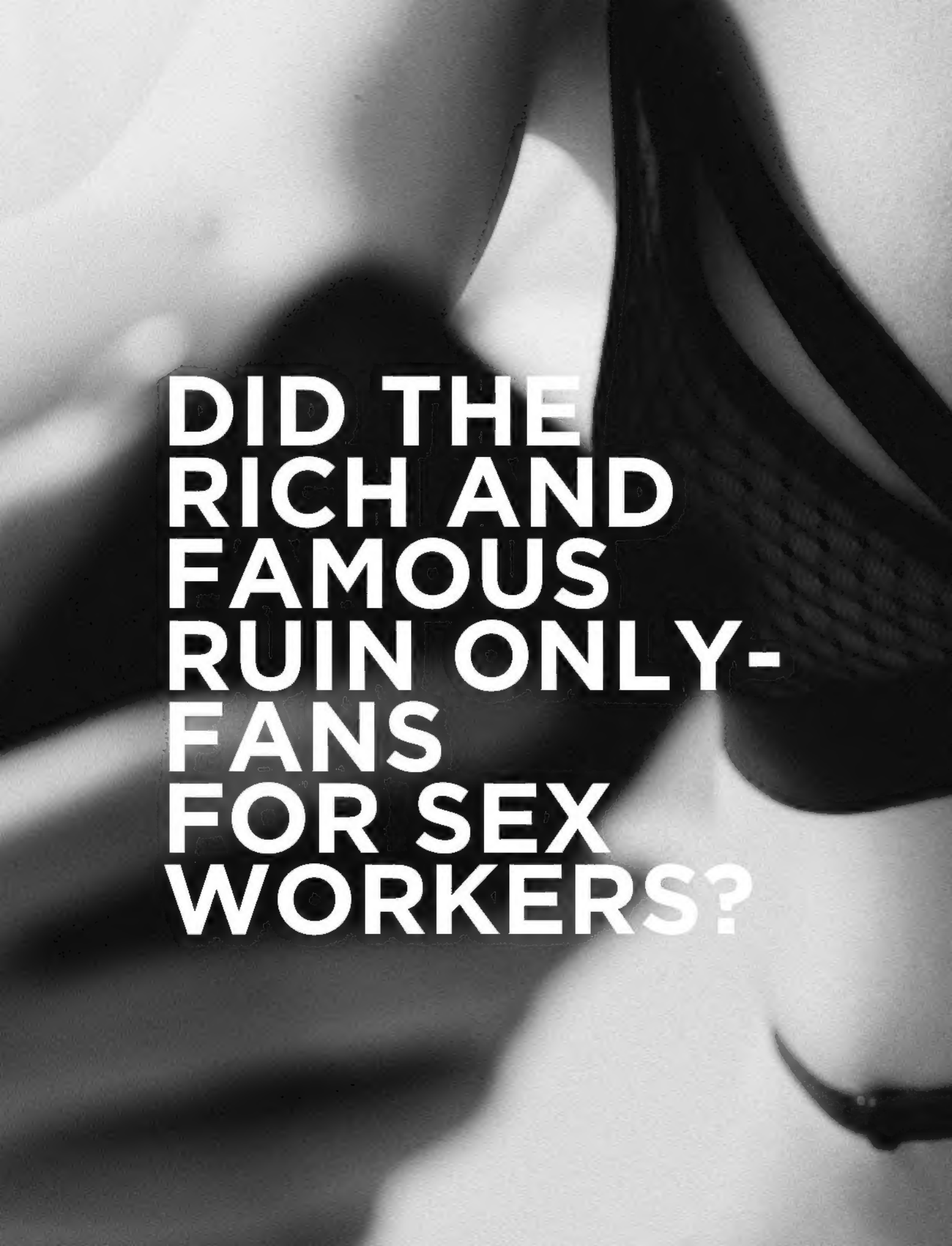
Luna shares Holliday's approach to self-care. "I've been in therapy for the past four years, consistently, and I'll likely have to stay in therapy for as long as I'm a therapist," Luna says. "I also move a lot—dancing, exercise, yoga, stretching. It's important for me to stay connected to my body because it reminds me of the uniqueness of who I am. My body is my boundary: I am myself, separate, with my own experiences, hurts and joys. I also journal and read a lot; cook big, delicious meals; go for long walks with my dog, who is the happiest and most present creature I've ever met; and spend time with my family doing a lot of work around our own intergenerational trauma. It's difficult, but it also strengthens my empathy muscles and makes me a better therapist because I'm in the thick of it just like my clients are—just like we all are."

Being a trauma-informed sexuality professional is growing in importance as sexual violence becomes more prominent in popular culture. If someone is interested in working in this niche, what should they do?

Holliday says the best approach is to build a community. "Whether it's online, in person or both, connecting with other trauma-informed sexuality professionals is a great way to learn tips and best practices, collaborate on projects and educate yourself," Holliday says. "It can be intimidating to just jump in, but I'd recommend starting with Twitter and Instagram accounts to establish yourself in the field and attending conferences such as Sex Down South. If you're drawn to teaching, reach out to a local community center or feminist sex shop and pitch a workshop idea. Whatever avenue you choose, just come! We need you."

Luna's advice echoes Holliday's, with some much-needed encouragement: "Be brave. It isn't easy, and a lot of our own stuff gets triggered by our clients' pain and trauma histories. It can be really hard, but if it's something you know you want to do, it's worth it. Most importantly, be brave enough to be vulnerable—with your clients and also with yourself."

"How can we integrate our painful experiences into our lives in a way that allows us to feel whole? How can we claim space for our joy and our pleasure?"


DID THE RICH AND FAMOUS RUIN ONLY-FANS FOR SEX WORKERS?

Recent debacles have highlighted the platform's growing pains

BY ALEX THOMAS
PHOTO BY PARILOV

When Bella Thorne joined OnlyFans and crashed the site in August, it was the least surprising thing to happen on the platform. OnlyFans had been aimed toward a moment like Thorne's for a while; similarly, the adult industry had been heading for a moment like the rise of OnlyFans for years.

If you're not familiar with her work, Thorne achieved C-list mainstream fame first on the Disney Channel sitcom Shake It Up, which ran from 2010 to 2013, and subsequently in Adam Sandler's 2014 movie Blended and a 2015 Alvin and the Chipmunks sequel. She wasn't exactly famous, but was notable in that auxiliary sort of way where people recognized her name after you read her IMDb page aloud to them.

In the first week after she joined OnlyFans, Thorne told the Los Angeles Times, she made $2 million by charging a subscription rate of $20 per month. It was a massive payday that had a number of consequences. First, everybody was suddenly talking about OnlyFans and everybody was talking suddenly about Bella Thorne.

Recently, OnlyFans has been pushing hard for influencers outside of sex work to join their platform.

But the immediate rise to relevance was not smooth. Some of Thorne's subscribers claimed she charged $200 for a photo she had allegedly promoted as "nude" but that didn't fulfill that description. They demanded their money back from OnlyFans and the platform made a number of changes, including reducing the ceiling for tips to $100.

OnlyFans has denied that the changes were a result of Thorne's $2 million haul, but sex workers were unconvinced. In a statement, OnlyFans told Playboy, "All policy changes are thoughtfully implemented with the safety and support for our users and content creators at top of mind. Our objective remains to provide the best platform possible for the OnlyFans community. We can confirm that any changes to transaction limits are not based on any one user."

The platform also said "verified" creators can receive $200 per tip, explaining, "the new max individual tip a user can give to a creator is limited to $100 initially. After they are verified, it goes up to $200." But multiple verified creators who spoke to Playboy said the tip ceiling on their accounts is $100, not the $200 figure OnlyFans cited.

Sex workers on the platform have been periodically frustrated with the Kafkaesque nature of OnlyFans for months, and most weren't surprised when Thorne's entrance shook the platform. "She's not the first celebrity to do this," OnlyFans creator and porn star Joslyn Jane says. "She was the big name that blew it out of the water because she made so much money, but it's been going on for a while."

Another glaring reason Thorne's appearance on OnlyFans infuriated so many sex workers on the platform was her apparent disregard for their community. After she crashed the site and the pay scale was changed, Thorne offered differing explanations. None of them were particularly convincing. Initially, she claimed she was making a movie with filmmaker Sean Baker. But Baker, who did not respond to requests for comment from Playboy, immediately shot down that statement, saying in a tweet, "I'm NOT attached to this project.... Earlier this month, I had a conversation with Ms. Thorne and discussed a possible collaboration in the far future that would focus on her life and the circumstances leading her to joining OnlyFans."

"On that call," he added, "I advised her team to consult with sex workers and address the way she went about this as to NOT hurt the sex work industry. This has been the extent of my involvement."

After Baker's denial, Thorne posted a string of tweets, saying she hoped to "remove the stigma behind sex, sex work, and the negativity that surrounds the word SEX itself by bringing a mainstream face to it. [That's] what I was trying to do, to help bring more faces to the site to create more revenue for content creators on the site."

In another tweet, she issued an apology to sex workers on the platform. "I am a mainstream face and when you have a voice, a platform, you try to use [it] in helping others and advocate for something bigger than yourself," she wrote. "Again in this process I hurt you and for that I'm truly sorry." Thorne also claimed she was meeting with OnlyFans "about the new restrictions." OnlyFans has not responded to Playboy's request for a comment on that dialogue or whether it even materialized.

UNLV gender and sexuality studies professor Lynn Comella, who co-authored the 2015 book New Views on Pornography: Sexuality, Politics, and the Law, told Playboy, "One of the things this moment reveals to me is a real naivete—and I think it has to be called that—on the part of Bella Thorne, to do whatever it was she thought she was doing. And it's not even clear what she was doing, because her story has changed. Was it a PR stunt? Was it research, as she said, for some kind of project?"

Comella also said Thorne's rationale that her mainstream face on OnlyFans would destigmatize sex work was "problematic."

Mainstream celebrities like Thorne joining OnlyFans brought legitimacy and name recognition to the platform. Cardi B announced on Instagram in August that she was joining OnlyFans, but, unlike Thorne, she said during that announcement that she wouldn't be nude on the site. The site also enjoyed entrance to the annals of pop culture fame when Beyonce name-checked it in a remix of Megan Thee Stallion's "Savage." OnlyFans quickly responded by issuing a statement to Rolling Stone saying, "Beyoncé, and any artist, are welcome to join OnlyFans at any time to foster a deeper connection with their fans."

Recently, OnlyFans has been pushing hard for influencers outside of sex work to join their platform. On Twitter, they constantly draw attention to those new creators. In a September 7 tweet, they wrote, "Calling all influencers! Time to monetise your content and connect with your fans like never before!"

That campaign has led many sex workers on the platform to fear that OnlyFans will someday push them off the platform they helped build. "It's pretty pervasive," says Kate Kennedy when asked about that fear. "I don't know that it's well-founded. OnlyFans still makes the vast majority of its money off sex workers."

"I know some people who are now doing a lot more PG stuff and a lot less adult stuff on their OnlyFans," Jane says. "A lot of people believe that because all these famous people are joining OnlyFans now and OnlyFans is pushing them to join the platform, it's no longer going to be an adult site. That's the fear a lot of people have."

Sex worker advocate Kate D'Adamo echoed those fears. "Everyone should be really conscious about that possibility—sex workers building the profile of a website and then being removed from that website as soon as it becomes more mainstream," she says. "Look at Tumblr. Sex work and sex literally made it relevant, and then sex workers got kicked off. The platforms that have allowed sex workers to stay have been targeted hardcore. Backpage got a lot of bad press and then [its founders] got charged with facilitating prostitution."

"The idea that a website is going to take on that liability—I don't trust any website," D'Adamo added.

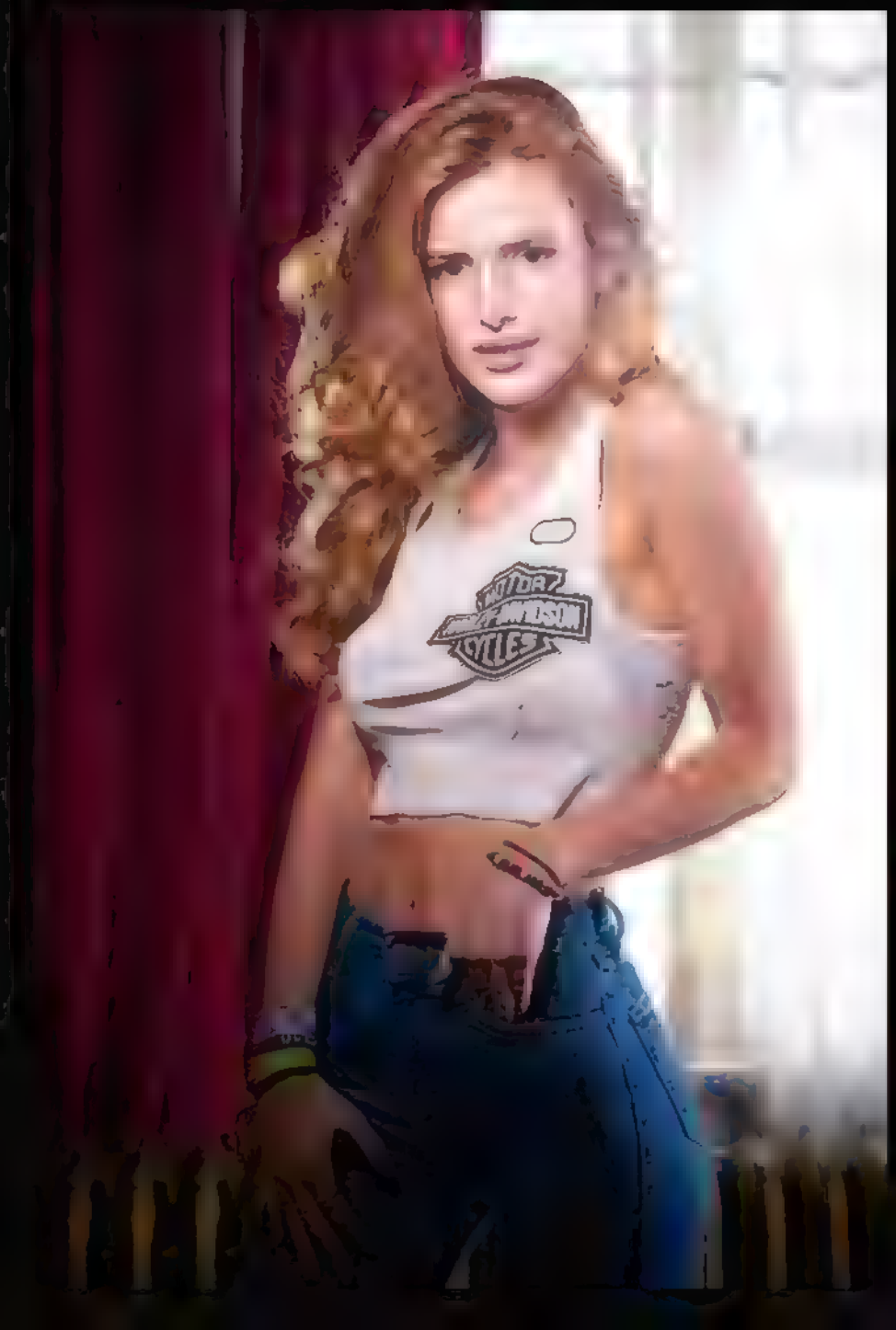
Platforms that mirror OnlyFans have been appearing en masse for the past several months. "I definitely think that now, a lot of companies are going to start to emerge that are going to be competing with OnlyFans," Jane says.

But sex workers on OnlyFans note that running their profiles on a platform is a full-time job, and branching out to other platforms stretches them thin. "It's always smart, as a sex worker, to diversify your online presence as much as you are able to," Kennedy says. "While the spirit of that advice is good, the reality of it is that asking one person to manage 10 different social media platforms is a lot."

"That impacts your money as well, because they have a tendency to cannibalize each other," she says. "My advice has always been to make one your focus, but have the rest of them so if one goes down, you can bring the others up really quickly."

Although Thorne's entrance to OnlyFans and her massive payout was a very clearly defined moment in the life of the platform, sex workers are now at a much looser moment on OnlyFans. They have been eyeing it suspiciously but hopefully—with few options available to their industry. But the future of the industry and what platforms it functions on is much less obvious.

Look at Tumblr. Sex work and sex literally made it relevant, and then sex workers got kicked off.



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UN
Albina Lagress

Such an absolute honor to have you! How do you like to begin your day? I like starting my day by waking up early to catch the sunrise over the city skyline. After some morning stretches and a light nutritious breakfast, I do face yoga exercises and learn Hebrew and Spanish languages. Then, I plan my schedule, which includes traveling, photoshoots, replying to messages and calls, and perhaps some time for self-care and relaxation.

What's the most exciting hobby or interest you've pursued recently, and how did you get into it? I recently started to attend courses to get a private pilot license. The initial classes are a deep dive into the world of aviation, where I absorb the fundamentals of flight theory, navigation, and aircraft systems. I started doing this because I was traveling by plane 1-3 times per week and occasionally was invited as a flight attendant on private jets which made me excited about planes. I have a small dream now of having my own private jet and flying to Lanai Island on my own or with my family.

If you could spend a day doing anything you wanted, what would your ideal day look like? If I could spend a day doing anything I want I would also do the most craziest and dangerous things like wingsuit flying, volcano boarding, cave diving, etc.

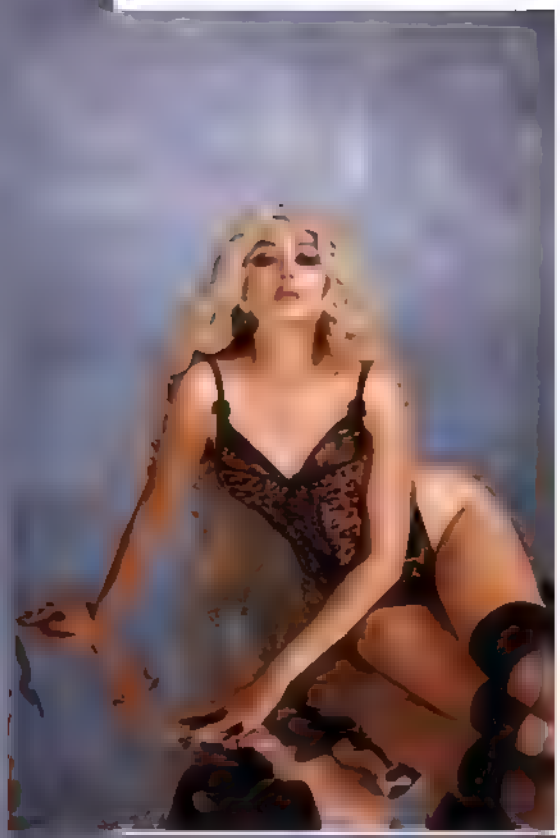
What's a project or goal you're currently working on that you're really excited about? My recent goal I am currently working on and excited about is becoming a model and an actress.

What's the most memorable date you've ever been on, and what made it stand out? The most memorable date I have ever been on was a date with my Israeli ex-boyfriend when I was 18 years old. He gifted me two condos in Ukraine and I was very excited about it.

Are there any qualities or traits you find particularly attractive in a partner? What do you value the most? There are a few things that I value the most in a partner: generosity, carefulness, ability to find beautiful things everywhere.

Who has been your biggest inspiration or role model in your personal or professional life? My biggest inspiration and role model is the actress Marilyn Monroe.

What do you enjoy most about your hobbies or interests outside of work? I enjoy the most about my hobbies adrenaline and high levels of emotions, the beauty of nature.



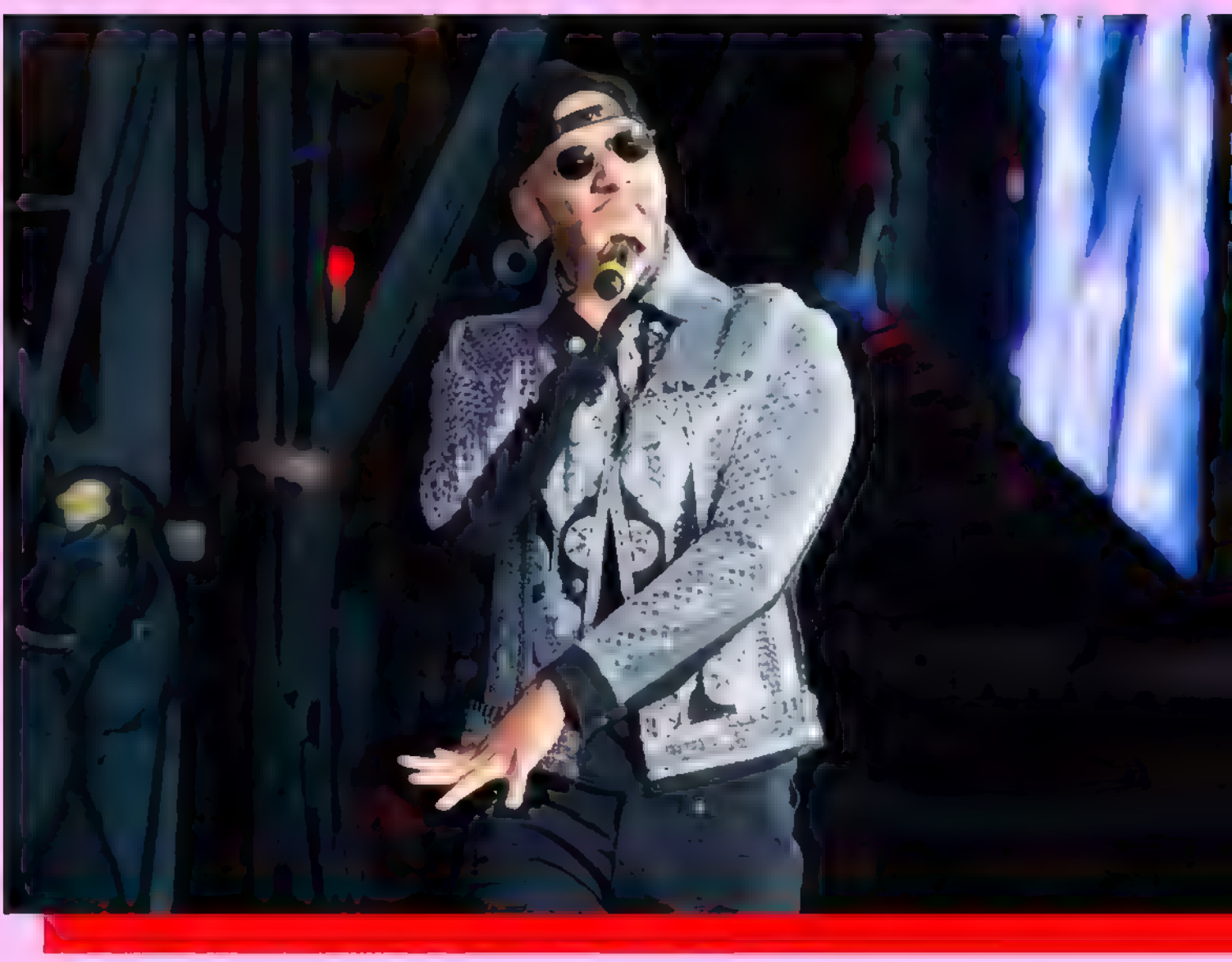
How do you find a balance between your personal life and your career? In order to find a balance between my personal life and my career I try to always focus on the most valuable and effective actions. I am trying to figure out what exactly my family and partner need and what they can do by themselves, and a similar thing in my career - what gives the biggest result.

How do you stay motivated and overcome challenges in your work? I always stay optimistic in order to overcome challenges in my work.

Where can our readers catch up with you and stay updated with your work? Readers can catch up with me via my Instagram @abinaligress.

SOUL AND ENERGY

Timbaland and Swizz Beatz on Verzuz



A conversation with the mastermind producers on their streaming-battle sensation and why everyone from LeBron James to Kamala Harris is tuning in

BY **SOWMYA KRISHNAMURTHY**

Swizz Beatz and Timbaland don't remember exactly how they met. It might have been while Timbaland was working with Missy Elliott. Or maybe it was at an awards show. Swizz isn't sure—but he knows it was decades ago.

"When we first met I wasn't really, how would you put it, super sociable," he admits. "We used to always see each other in passing." Timbaland recalls their paths crossed while they were both working on tracks for Jay-Z, he on "Big Pimpin'" and Swizz on "Jigga My Nigga."

"It was probably at a studio," Timbaland says. "Back then, studio work was our life."

As two of hip-hop's most prolific producers, Swizz Beatz and Timbaland have helmed hits for the likes of Kanye West, Beyoncé, Aaliyah, DMX and, of course, Jay-Z, and have both more than earned their coveted "superproducer" status. They share rarefied air.

"It was always friendly competition," says Timbaland.

Laughs Swizz, "Very high competition."

It was from this simpatico relationship—and a message from a higher power—that Verzuz was born.

Perhaps the first cultural juggernaut of the music world to emerge from the pandemic, Verzuz is a streaming sensation. What began as a friendly tête-à-tête between the two producers—each going song for song against each other on Instagram Live during the nascent days of quarantine—has exploded into a showdown between veteran artists, songwriters and producers.

The format is straightforward. Each challenger selects a track to go up against the opponent's, and they go back and forth for 20 rounds. In early Verzuz bouts there was a fervor to crown a winner each time, but as the pandemic stretched on and the sociopolitical landscape shifted, the ethos evolved into more of a happy celebration of cultural excellence.

Verzuz lineups have included Beenie Man vs. Bounty Killer, Jill Scott vs. Erykah Badu and Gladys Knight vs. Patti LaBelle. The inaugural Instagram Live battle took place in late March, with Swizz Beatz and Timbaland furiously trading tracks for more than 20,000 viewers. The audience increased exponentially from there. More than 500,000 tuned in for the July 22 "battle of the dogs" between DMX and Snoop—one of hip-hop's unsung friendships—and the audience for former R&B rivals Brandy and Monica was more than double that.

In just six months, Verzuz has become must-watch entertainment. The battles not only allow fans to relive classic discographies but also provide an intimate experience, a front-row seat to watch legends trade war stories and never-before-heard anecdotes.

But Verzuz's success hasn't come without growing pains.

Technical difficulties plagued early shows; Nelly's wi-fi in his battle against Ludacris was so bad his stream fully froze at times. CNN went so far as to call the original Babyface and Teddy Riley battle a "complete fail" because of the audio problems. As a result, some artists refused to participate in Verzuz, worried it might hurt their image. Understanding the need to up the production value, Swizz Beatz and Timbaland forged a partnership with Apple Music in July. The deal, which allows them to retain full ownership of the brand, provides additional resources and expands Verzuz to Apple TV. Since then, productions have gone noticeably smoother

Verzuz is the perfect medium for the moment. And it has created an unexpected return to appointment viewing, with megawatt names like Michelle Obama, Rihanna and LeBron James showing up in the audience alongside hundreds of thousands of other fans. Vice presidential nominee Kamala Harris even made a surprise cameo during the face-off between Brandy and Monica. For artists, the battles provide a revival in relevance and a surge in catalog streams—a happy consequence now known as "the Verzuz effect."

For the masterminds behind the idea, it's all still surreal. Timbaland and Swizz Beatz say they're floored by the runaway success of Verzuz—and a little overwhelmed by the plethora of calls and meetings that now take up their days. Calling in from Miami and the Middle East, respectively, the two producers spoke to Playboy about how a friendly rivalry birthed the pandemic's first pop culture phenomenon

"I come up from battles. I wasn't even thinking digitally with Verzuz. Why would you want to watch online when you could just go to a show?"

PLAYBOY: The origin story of Verzuz goes back to 2018, when you had a battle during Hot 97's Summer Jam. Was the original idea that Verzuz would be a live event?

TIMBALAND: The goal was to get artists to do it live, to do it on tour, to make it with the people. We didn't have an idea of it being digital

SWIZZ: I come up from battles. I wasn't even thinking digitally with Verzuz. Why would you want to watch online when you could just go to a show?

TIMBALAND: Now once you see it in the digital world, it makes total sense

SWIZZ: Right? We wasn't even thinking like that; that just happened. Look at where we at now. It's still mind-blowing to me.

PLAYBOY: Did you actually go around and pitch the initial idea? Did anyone see the vision?

TIMBALAND: Nobody sees your vision, you know that. I think we all know that in life. If everybody sees your vision, it wouldn't push you to go forward. Of course nobody saw our vision.

SWIZZ: It's funny because I always keep my diary, I write my notes and my thoughts. I was flipping through it as I'm out here planning different things, putting them in the universe. And I looked back and I'm seeing the page that said 2018, and it had this whole layout of Verzuz. It had our tour, the cities we were going to go to. It had us versing our albums, it had who we was going to pick in different towns to come on stage to verse each other on our sets. It had merch. Looking back at that page, it was pretty crazy

PLAYBOY: How did the pandemic cause you to change course?

TIMBALAND: The pandemic is bad, but it made me realize I was wasting time doing a lot of things that were unnecessary. Spending a lot of unnecessary money. When the world actually did halt [in March], I just went into meditation and prayer. I kept hearing a voice in me "Technology, technology." And I'm just like, Okay, I know it's technology, but I need more answers. I'm praying, I'm thinking. I ran out to my studio and I called Swizz. I said, "You remember that idea? That vision, Verzuz? Let's just go now."

SWIZZ: He started posting beats on his Instagram and saying my name. "Swizz, what we doing?" He did it like three times. And then I put up a beat, and was like, "Tim, you know what we doing. We doing whatever you want to do. What we doing?" He did about three [beats], I did about three, then we got on the phone and he was like, "Man, we should just go on and do it. Let's just get on [Instagram] Live and just have some fun." An hour after that conversation, we was live for 20 or 30,000 people, and that was the birth of the digital side of Verzuz. The 2.0 version.

PLAYBOY: And that was a long battle.

SWIZZ: We was going for five hours. I was in my car, he was in his studio, and we just kept going. And we could've went for another five. That's how much music we have.

PLAYBOY: The evolution from the first split-screen Verzuz battles to today has been interesting. It was far less polished in the beginning, but when things didn't go as planned—Teddy Riley's internet connectivity issues, Sean Garrett's raucous

state—it made for memorable moments. Do you take those spontaneous moments in stride or are you striving for perfection?

SWIZZ: One thing we was running into was the quality When Dr. Dre turned down Verzuz because of the quality, me and Tim had to sit back at the drawing board because we can never let that happen again. The Apple partnership is good because it came with them producing the show with us. Us still owning 100 percent of it, but them bringing some extra quality, not leaving it to the artists to produce the show.

TIMBALAND: I think Swizz is probably more perfectionist than I am. But we learned as we went along Now we're doing those steps. Now we understand the audience You got to find out through trial and error.

SWIZZ: I'm a Virgo, so I'm definitely a perfectionist Not everybody's savvy like that. People don't really know what level their internet's at. They just want to show up and do they thing I feel a couple of artists got slighted in battles because they didn't take their technology seriously or take the sound-checking seriously The fact that we were able to take that off the artists' table with our partnership with Apple, we think it's a super plus. We got two big trucks outside, the wi-fi, real cameras and everything like that. It's what it's supposed to be. These artists should be shown in the best light, it still should feel organic.

"A couple of artists got slighted in battles because they didn't take their technology or the sound-checking seriously."

PLAYBOY: You mentioned Dr. Dre was wary of doing Verzuz for quality reasons. Babyface was initially hesitant as well. Can you talk a little bit about those calls with artists?

SWIZZ: Yeah, the phone calls don't stop. It's super daily And you'd be surprised how hesitant a lot of artists are when a lot of them haven't been on the big stage like that in a long time, and they don't really know what the fans are going to think. We spend a lot of time giving the artist confidence that they are going to go to the next level.

PLAYBOY: How do you decide the matchups? In instances like Brandy vs. Monica, the rivalry was well established. But other battles were a pleasant surprise, like DMX vs. Snoop Dogg.

SWIZZ: A lot of people look at the names, but they don't look at the music And me and Tim got to curate the music. You could put two names that sound good, but what does it sound like? Do they have the songs? I'm a DJ first, I come from being a DJ, so I know what goes together. That's like a gift. And Tim knows as well. Right now, we got one that's on the table that sounded cool in the beginning, but when we start listening to the songs and the energy, we're like, "Man, we got to tell them we can't do that "

PLAYBOY: Recent battles feel like less of a competition and more of a celebration between artists sharing backstories and career milestones

TIMBALAND: I tell artists, "Come on you guys, celebrate. The world wants to see you celebrating." You've got to understand Gladys Knight took a tour bus to Philly to go celebrate [with Patti LaBelle for Verzuz] Think about the love, right? She called me, she said, "I love what y'all are doing, baby. I want to be a part of this "

SWIZZ: Music is the biggest currency for your soul, and that's why it's important for us to curate that right, and to give the people certain things at certain times We also curate the energy

PLAYBOY: Who's on your wish list for future battles?

SWIZZ: As a hip-hop fanatic, I definitely want to see Big Daddy Kane versus Rakim

PLAYBOY: I would love to see Usher vs Justin Timberlake

SWIZZ: Well, that's the one that we've been fighting for They both have that time period, they both around the same age, they both have the same rankings. Also, I definitely want to see Anita Baker and Sade

PLAYBOY: Both of you already have illustrious careers in hip-hop What does Verzuz mean to you in the grand scheme?

TIMBALAND: I know a lot of times I took things for granted, took for granted the gifts that God gave me And this is a precious dream of both of ours. For me, I like to just be thankful

SWIZZ: We have to be smart, have to have smart people around that's making these real amazing decisions with us, so that's what we're doing. We're building up our team. This is just the start. We didn't even launch Verzuz global yet, we didn't even launch so many different things.

TIMBALAND: I'm not trying to be chasing partners, millions. I did that. This is different. This is being a CEO of a company and letting the brand be bigger than you. You don't see me and Swizz jumping out. We're not trying to be the face of Verzuz Verzuz is bigger than us.

SWIZZ: The planes are just taking off the runway. We're nowhere near our destination yet. We're having fun, and we're keeping it simple But the sky is not the limit, it's just a view

Playboy Interview

Derek Jeter

A candid conversation with the Yankees star about coping with George Steinbrenner, teaming with A-Rod and why he reads the gossip page before the sports page

INTERVIEW BY **DIANE K. SHAH** PHOTOGRAPHY BY **C.J. WALKER**

In a sport oddly denuded of household names and true superstars, Derek Jeter stands tall. The New York Yankee is more than just one of the game's best players; for years he's been a media darling in the world's most fickle city. The 29-year-old shortstop turns up in gossip columns almost as frequently as he does in the sports pages. He has been linked to scores of beautiful and high-profile women. The New York Post recently ranked Jeter number one on its year-end list of the city's 34 most eligible guys. For denizens of the Big Apple, Jeter has been Mr. Baseball, pure and simple. Life's been good.

And then A-Rod came into town. In February, when the Yankees signed Alex Rodriguez, widely touted as the game's best player, sportswriters wondered what it would mean—to Jeter. Complicating the issue, the former Texas Ranger is a shortstop with two Gold Gloves (Jeter has none) who had to move to third base when he signed with the Yankees. More drama? The two men had once been the closest of friends, but they had a falling-out three years ago. For gossip-crazed New Yorkers, theirs has

become one of the most closely watched relationships in town

While A-Rod was voted last year's American League Most Valuable Player, Jeter is no slouch. Now in the fourth year of a 10-year,$189 million contract, Jeter owns a .317 career batting average. He has played in the postseason in every one of his eight seasons and often saves his best for October. In 2000, when the Yankees beat the crosstown Mets in the World Series in five games, he was named series MVP. And although the Anaheim Angels wiped out the Yanks in the first round of the 2002 postseason, Jeter hit .500. Last spring Yankees owner George Steinbrenner named him team captain, only the 11th in franchise history.

Off the field Jeter is also a player, known for his dalliances with Mariah Carey, a former Miss Universe and a bevy of models and actresses. As Yankees broadcaster Charley Steiner put it, "If the Yankees are the Beatles, Derek's the cute one."

The son of a racially mixed couple, Jeter grew up in Kalamazoo, Michigan and put on his first Yankees uniform when he was six. In 1992 he was named high school player of the year and was chosen sixth by the Yankees in the June free agent baseball draft. He was voted the American League Rookie of the Year in 1996, his first full season in the majors, and quickly established himself as one of baseball's best all-around players. Jeter's seasonal averages of .207 hits and 124 runs are extraordinary. Long considered the Yankees' leader, he also has a knack for elevating the play of his teammates.

While he's one of baseball's most accessible players, he's one of the most private as well. Like a seasoned politician, Jeter carefully crafts his courteous statements—and sticks to them. Rarely does he lose his composure. "He's kind of vanilla," notes his agent, Casey Close. Conscious of commanding center stage, Jeter admits that he rarely lets down his guard.

We sent journalist Diane K. Shah to Jeter's winter home in Tampa, Florida, where she had to get past the guards posted at his gated community before tackling the more formidable guards in his head.

PLAYBOY: A lot has been made of your relationship with Alex Rodriguez. Until 2001 you referred to him as your best friend. Then, after he signed his $252 million deal with Texas, he said some unflattering things about you through the media—that you never had to serve as a leader and that since you bat second, teams don't worry that you'll beat them. When reporters informed you of this, you said you'd call Alex and talk to him. What happened?

JETER: It was spring training, and he actually came over here the night that came out. Just came by. We talked about it, and that was basically the end of it.

PLAYBOY: We heard that he drove 95 miles from the Rangers' spring-training camp to your house and left phone messages you didn't return. Is that true?

JETER: No. When that stuff went public, I guess it was in the afternoon when I found out about it. We had a game that night, and he drove over while we were playing. So I didn't get the messages that he was at my house until after the game.

PLAYBOY: He was chilling in your driveway?

JETER: He was in the area, but he wasn't in the driveway.

PLAYBOY: Still, you were hurt.

JETER: Sure, it hurts anytime someone you're close to says something you question. But Alex was coming from Seattle and had signed this megadeal. He was on a platform that maybe he'd never been on before. I think he found himself having to defend the reason he got paid so much. Or he was asked, "If you get this, what's Derek going to get?" So he was comparing us, which I told him shouldn't even be an issue. I said, "You didn't pay yourself. You shouldn't have to answer that question. Let them ask the owner." I think he was saying things that maybe other people had said to him.

PLAYBOY: After that it appeared you two weren't close.

JETER: We weren't as close as we had been. We were still friends. The younger you are, the more time you have when the season is over. Now it seems you do more in the off-season than you do during the season.

PLAYBOY: How did you hear about the trade?

JETER: A couple of people in the organization called me.

PLAYBOY: What were you doing when you got the word?

JETER: No idea. Probably watching TV.

PLAYBOY: The last time you'd seen Alex, when you two were making a commercial, did you talk about the possibility of his becoming a Yankee?

JETER: No, because that was before Aaron Boone tore his ACL. It was right around the time when everything was happening with the potential trade to Boston, and he basically didn't know what was going on.

PLAYBOY: Once A-Rod signed on did anybody ask if you were willing to move to second or third?

JETER: That was never an issue. They approached him about playing third base.

PLAYBOY: Isn't it easier to move from shortstop to second than to third?

JETER: Nah, I wouldn't say that. Turning a double play is totally different from second base than from shortstop. Your back is to first. So I would assume it would be easier to go to third base.

PLAYBOY: How did your teammates react to the news?

JETER: Everyone's pretty excited. You're adding one of the best all-around players in the game to your lineup, so it's only going to make us a better team.

PLAYBOY: Is it true George Steinbrenner ordered you to go to Alex's news conference in New York?

JETER: No, he called me and asked if I wanted to go.

PLAYBOY: Some news accounts reported that he demanded you go.

JETER: See, you can't believe everything you read.

PLAYBOY: To what degree are you amused or bothered by the speculation that you and Alex can't get along?

JETER: Neither of us has had problems getting along with teammates before, so I don't see why we'd have problems now. It gives the media something to write about, though. I think it will eventually die down.

PLAYBOY: You've said you're very competitive. What kinds of things will you be competitive about with Alex?

JETER: Well, we're on the same team, so we really don't have anything to compete for. We're playing a team sport, right?

PLAYBOY: How about your batting average versus his?

JETER: No. I don't go into a season saying I want to bat higher than any one of my teammates. That's not a goal. The goal is to win.

PLAYBOY: Who's funnier?

JETER: I think we're funny in different ways. I'm not sure you can rate us. You'd have to be around both of us to make that decision.

PLAYBOY: We noticed a book on the table in your entryway, Patton on Leadership: Strategic Lessons for Corporate Warfare, by Alan Axelrod. Any particular reason you own that?

JETER: Mr. Steinbrenner gave it to me after the 1998 season.

PLAYBOY: Was it meant to teach you, or was it meant to explain him?

JETER: I think both. A lot of what's in there are things he says: g"If you're going to lead, you've got to sit in the saddle." "You've got to be willing to go out and do the things you ask of the people you're leading." It's pretty interesting.

PLAYBOY: He inscribed it, g"To Derek. Read and study. He was a great leader just as you are and will be a great leader. Hopefully of the men in pinstripes." How would you describe your relationship with Big George?

JETER. It's always boss-employee. He's the boss. But I think we have a really good relationship. I don't know how it could be any better in terms of playing for him.

PLAYBOY: But last year, after he questioned your dedication and your late-night hours, you were pissed off. Was that the first time he publicly criticized you?

JETER: No, he mentioned my name, among other players, when the team was struggling a few years ago. He said some guys needed to start stepping it up. He meant me. But the whole thing last year was blown out of proportion. He mentioned a birthday party. How many birthday parties do you have a year?

PLAYBOY: So Steinbrenner was referring to just one party? Your birthday is in June, he's bringing it up six months later?

JETER: It was my birthday party before a day off. The next thing you knew, I'd been turned into a big party animal. Now you read that all the time—I'm the party animal.

PLAYBOY: Steinbrenner said more than that. He said you g"always give 100 percent. I need 110 percent." And he said, "If I'm paying a guy $16 million, I want him to listen."

JETER: The whole thing was made larger than life. That was the point of those Visa commercials. We got a chance to make light of the situation and put it behind us.

PLAYBOY: Does he expect you to work for him 24-7, 365 days a year?

JETER: Probably. Rightfully so. When you're a Yankee you represent the Yankees at all times. You don't have days off. If I were to get into trouble today, the first thing you'd see is my name associated with the team. So I don't think you have 20 or 30 days off a year from being a Yankee. You're always a Yankee.

PLAYBOY: How about during the offseason? What if you wanted to go out and enjoy somebody's company until three or four in the morning?

JETER: Oh, I'd be out. I'm a grown man. In the off-season I can do whatever I want, whenever I want to do it. He wouldn't call me if he read I was out until such and such an hour in January. He wouldn't say, g"You need to be home."

PLAYBOY: How often do you see Steinbrenner?

JETER: He hasn't been around as much as he used to be. Last season I saw him probably two or three times before the postseason.

PLAYBOY: You both spend your winters in Tampa. Does he ever call you and say, g"Let's get lunch"?

JETER: It's happened maybe once or twice. We usually bet a dinner on the Ohio State-Michigan football game.

PLAYBOY: When you get together, does he have a message for you?

JETER: He always has messages. g"Make sure you focus this year. I need you focused." Or he'll see me working out and say, "Don't get too big, because we need you to have agility."

PLAYBOY: In the first Visa commercial, in which Steinbrenner chastises you for being out carousing every night, was it your idea that he participate in the conga line?

JETER: No, but I was the one who had to persuade him to do it. It wasn't easy. He did it a couple of times, and then he called it quits. Fortunately they got a good take.

PLAYBOY: Is it ever fun seeing your name in the gossip columns?

JETER: Some of the stories are funny. Some of them amaze me. Like one time they said I was renting an island—some island I'd never heard of—for $23,000 a day and that I was bringing one of three girls I'd never heard of for a birthday party. The thing is, people believe it when they read it. I was talking to Wayne Gretzky the other day about his time in New York. He said they made up things about him constantly. He used to get the newspapers and turn to the gossip pages, and when he'd read something about someone else he'd say, g"Really? They did this?" But when he read about himself it was, "Where do they come up with this stuff?" I thought that was funny, because I do the same thing.

PLAYBOY: So you do read the gossip pages?

JETER: Even before the sports section. To make sure I'm not in them.

PLAYBOY: You seem to need to be a perfectionist on the field. Why is that?

JETER: Competition-wise I always want to be perfect. I can't stand losing in anything. If you tell me you want to race down the street right now, I'm going to try to beat you.

PLAYBOY: We're pretty sure you'd win.

JETER: I'll still do everything in my power to beat you, and that started when I was a kid. My dad used to beat me at everything. We'd play checkers, and he would beat me. He would never let me win. Never. We used to watch The Price Is Right, and we'd play the showcase showdown. I didn't know how much a refrigerator or a new car cost—I was six years old. We'd sit there and he'd beat me, and then I'd walk to school.

PLAYBOY: Do you ever wish your dad had let you win?

JETER: No—I think my dad was teaching me lessons. Things don't come easily. People aren't just going to let you get your way. I mean, people aren't going to say, g"Here, you can have this." You have to work for it.

PLAYBOY: You wrote in your book, The Life You Imagine, that you always try to envision something before you do it. Is that because you're conscious of being a role model, or is that just you?

JETER: I think it's me no matter what. When I was younger, before I'd do things I'd imagine what my parents would think. It's the same philosophy I apply today. But now it's more than my parents. Lots of people are watching.

PLAYBOY: It sounds as if you're always watching yourself, like in an out-of-body experience.

JETER: Yes, and I'm pretty much used to it now. I'm always aware that people are watching. There are a lot of things I'd like to do that I can't—or that I choose not to. Say I'm out with some friends and I want to dance on top of a table. I know I can't do that.

PLAYBOY: Doesn't it get tiring, always watching yourself?

"I'll do everything in my power to beat you, and that started when I was a kid. My dad used to beat me at everything. We'd play checkers and he would beat me. He would never let me win. Never."

JETER. Yes, but I don't think it's a bad thing. When you let that guard down, that's when you get in trouble.

PLAYBOY: Last season was a strange one for you, full of highs and lows. Among the lows: In game six of the World Series you went 0 for 4, struck out twice and made an error that led to a Marlins insurance run. Series over. And you suffered three injuries, including a dislocated shoulder on opening day. Was that the most serious injury you've ever had?

JETER. It was the only serious injury I've had. I was out for six weeks.

PLAYBOY. You were heading to third; the catcher, Ken Huckaby, ran over to cover the base, and you slid into his shin guard. What was your first thought?

JETER. I thought maybe I had broken my collarbone, because I felt a pop.

PLAYBOY. Was there instant pain?

JETER: It didn't feel good. I wouldn't recommend it. I was kind of afraid to look at it, because I thought I'd see it coming out.

PLAYBOY: Did they just push it back in?

JETER. They tried initially, on the field, but that didn't work. I just wanted to get off the field, because you have 50,000 people looking at you. It took a while for them to get the golf cart out there. Then finally we went inside and they popped it back in.

PLAYBOY. There was a bit of controversy, because it was reported that Huckaby tried to phone you to apologize but couldn't reach you. Then a day or two later he walked into your locker room to apologize, and you gave him an icy stare.

JETER. Not true. First, I never expected him to apologize, because I didn't think he purposely tried to dislocate my shoulder. Before the second game he told the media he'd tried to call me on my cell phone, I didn't answer and he left a message. That wasn't true. He doesn't have my cell number. If he wanted to get ahold of me, it's only a couple hundred feet from one clubhouse to the other. Or he could have called the trainers' room, because obviously that's where I was. It was all made up. What bothered me was how the thing was portrayed.

PLAYBOY. Late in the season, against Boston, you pulled a rib-cage muscle. How did that happen?

JETER. Swinging. We were facing a knuckleball pitcher, Tim Wakefield. I think I swung a little too hard.

PLAYBOY. Did you finish the at bat?

JETER: Yes. Then I had another at bat and got a hit. I was on first base, and they took me out. I think I missed a week.

PLAYBOY. Then there you were in the first game of the American League Championship Series, Boston again.

JETER: I think it was the second or third inning. I dove for a ball and my hand rolled over, and I tore a ligament in my thumb.

PLAYBOY. Your left thumb.

JETER. It was a bad year for my left side. It takes three or four months for that to heal. They gave me shots before the games against Boston, but I couldn't feel my thumb. So in the World Series I just played with it. They put a little mold thing—a little cast—inside my glove to stop my thumb from moving around.

PLAYBOY. The rivalry between the Yankees and the Red Sox has reached epic proportions, especially with A-Rod now in pinstripes. It isn't just the fans, is it?

JETER: The rivalry has gotten more intense each year I've been in the major leagues. You have respect for the other team, I think, but it's gotten to the point where in the postseason you've got guys throwing at each other's heads and charging the mound. It's almost like the old days, when they used to fight all the time.

PLAYBOY. Some said that in last year's playoffs, the Yankees used up everything against the Red Sox—seven games, the last one going extra innings—and you had nothing left for the Marlins.

JETER. The series with the Red Sox was emotionally draining because all seven games were intense. But I don't think that's why we lost. We lost because Florida played better than we did.

PLAYBOY. Did it take long to get over losing the World Series?

JETER. Yes, I hate to lose. For a while I didn't like to be out and around a lot of people. I pretty much kept to myself. But you never forget it. I still think about us losing. You want to remember what it feels like, because you don't want to have that feeling again. That's what drives you to try to be better.

PLAYBOY: So not only have the Yankees gone three years without a championship, but to add insult to injury, several days after the series you were waiting to go into a movie theater and got heckled by a fan. g"If you hadn't made that error, Jeter, you'd still be playing," she apparently said.

JETER. She was a young girl, and she was yelling about the error I made in game six. And then she said, real sarcastically, g"Better luck next year." She seemed to enjoy it. She was probably a Mets fan.

PLAYBOY. How often do you have to put up with that stuff outside the ballpark?

JETER: In Boston, all the time. That's a whole other world. I actually think I'm public enemy number one there.

PLAYBOY. Considering that the Red Sox nearly signed A-Rod, do you think you'll have to fight him for that title?

JETER: Maybe he can share the load with me. That's what I'm hoping for.

PLAYBOY. Is it difficult for you to go out alone?

JETER: I don't go anywhere by myself, period. You never know when you're going to run into someone who's been drinking and is acting foolish. You like to know that someone is always watching your back.

PLAYBOY. Women recognize you on the street and they squeal. Do you like it?

JETER. It's flattering. It's embarrassing, too. But anytime you get

"Yeah, I'm confident. I don't like cocky people. Confidence is how you feel. Cockiness is how you act. I'm always confident. There are times when you struggle, but if a big game is on the line, I expect to do well."

you've done. I don't mind it.

PLAYBOY: How many [illegible]

JETER: They're all married.

PLAYBOY: [illegible] you've dated [illegible] Victoria's Secret [illegible] model and an MTV [illegible] According to the New York Post [illegible] that true?

JETER: [illegible] I'm always smiling. She has to have a sense of humor because you've got to enjoy life intelligent. But I don't sit down and make a blueprint of how someone must look. I guess you just know the more you get to know someone and understand if you have things in common.

PLAYBOY: [illegible]

JETER: I was a fan of the movie. I've seen it a couple of times in New York.

PLAYBOY: The papers said she stalked you.

JETER: I don't know where they would get that from.

PLAYBOY: [illegible] serious?

JETER: We didn't date for as long as people think. I've heard all kinds of things. But it was really just a few months.

PLAYBOY: After it ended you said you realized you couldn't make a relationship work if the other person is famous too. Is that an ego thing?

JETER: Not at all. It's just tough when both people are in the public eye. I'm not saying it can't work, but there are a lot of rumors, a lot of gossip, different schedules.

PLAYBOY: You say you're eager to get married, but do you think you need to finish baseball first?

JETER: Not necessarily. I have to admit, I'm at a selfish point in my life in terms of what I'm trying to accomplish. But there are [illegible] when you wish you had [illegible]

PLAYBOY: How do you ask a woman out?

JETER: Initially it'll be as part of a group. I [illegible] my friends, and I'll know my friends. It's easier that way. Because [illegible] evolved.

PLAYBOY: [illegible] living?

JETER: I say I have a night job.

PLAYBOY: That's it?

JETER: And that I'm in the entertainment business. [smiles]

PLAYBOY: Do you ever get rejected?

JETER: Everyone gets rejected.

PLAYBOY: Are you involved [illegible]

JETER: I'm seeing someone in New York.

PLAYBOY: You're in the fourth year of a $189 million, 10-year contract. That's the greatest extravagance [illegible]

JETER: I get things [illegible]

New York.

PLAYBOY: The Hummer has a satellite dish on the roof.

JETER: I had Direct[illegible] rage. I've got to build a bigger garage.

PLAYBOY: Did we spot a motorcycle in there?

JETER: [illegible] a scooter. It was a Christmas gift from [illegible] used to play for the Yankees. Now he's with the Marlins, and he lives [illegible] doors down. He bought [illegible] both of us. But when we ride them in the guard stopped us at the gate. You can't drive motorized vehicles here. So we had to load them [illegible] them in that way. We ride them at night.

PLAYBOY: You're sure it's not a motorcycle?

JETER: [laughs] It's a scooter. I'm not allowed [illegible] in my contract. Actually, [illegible]

PLAYBOY: Right. What else do you spend money on? Clothes?

JETER: I have a lot of suits. I have a tailor in Chicago, Mr. [illegible] Jordan's guy, too. But really, I'm not a huge spender.

PLAYBOY: What music do you like?

JETER: [illegible] Jay-Z, Beyoncé, R. Kelly. That's pretty much it.

PLAYBOY: Two full seasons have passed, but people are still talking about that miraculous play against Oakland in the 2001 division series. Some say it's the infield equivalent of Willie Mays's catch in the 1954 World Series. The Yankees were down two games to none. If you lost game three, your season would be over. The Yankees were ahead one to nothing. Can you run us through it?

JETER: Jeremy Giambi was on first, there were two outs, and Terrence Long hit a long fly to right that fell in for a double. The second baseman, Alfonso Soriano, was the first cutoff man, and the first baseman, Tino Martinez, was the second cutoff man. But when Shane Spencer picked up the ball in right, he threw it over both their heads.

PLAYBOY: So you had Soriano down the [illegible] at short.

JETER: [illegible] five runners scored. I knew you'd thought if I could get to the ball and get rid of it quickly, we'd have a chance to get him.

PLAYBOY: [illegible]

JETER: [illegible] soon as I got it.

PLAYBOY: [illegible] perfect throw. Giambi was so shocked to see the ball coming that he [illegible] slide. When you see the highlight film, did the play look different to you than it looked as you were performing it?

JETER: To my mind, everything happened in slow motion. When I watched it later I just looked at it really [illegible] We'd practiced that play in spring training.

PLAYBOY: But nobody [illegible] there a name for it?

JETER: They just call it the Play.

> *"Alex and I weren't as close as we had been. But neither of us has had problems getting along with teammates before, so I don't see why we would have problems now. It gives the media something to write about, though."*

PLAYBOY. Two games later the same guy, Terrence Long, hit a pop-up into foul territory at Yankee Stadium. And you did a belly flop into the seats behind third base and came up with the ball. Was that the second most exciting play you've made?

JETER: I think it was exciting to watch. I don't think it was exciting to do it, because it hurt.

PLAYBOY: What's been your most embarrassing moment on the field?

JETER: We were playing in Minnesota. I'm on third with less than two outs. Someone hits a deep fly ball that bounces over the fence. It's a ground-rule double, so you get two bases, and I automatically score. But I'm still standing on third, tagging up in case the ball is caught. When it bounces over the fence, I turn to go, trip over my shoelaces and fall flat on my face. Then they show it over and over on the Jumbotron.

PLAYBOY: You and Alex are among the most famous baseball players today. Probably fewer than 10 are easily recognizable nationwide, whereas the NBA and the NFL have many more. Why is that?

JETER: They market their sports a lot better. I filmed a commercial with Alex and the Marlins' Josh Beckett for Major League Baseball. It's the first time baseball has done that. It's lagging behind the other sports, but I think now it's putting forth an effort.

PLAYBOY: Baseball also lags behind other sports when it comes to drug testing, especially for steroids. This season you'll be randomly tested. Should performance-enhancing drugs be banned?

JETER: Yes, without question, because they put everyone else at a disadvantage. There's also the public's perception. If someone comes back a little smaller or a little bigger, the first thing people wonder is, Did he take steroids before and isn't taking them now? Or is he using steroids now? I think the whole debate is putting a lot of questions in people's heads.

"I'm a grown man. I can do whatever I want, whenever I want. Steinbrenner wouldn't call me if I was out in January. He wouldn't say, 'You need to be home.'"

PLAYBOY: You grew up in Kalamazoo, Michigan. Your dad is black, your mom is white. How did they prepare you for your mixed ethnicity?

JETER: For me it was a normal situation. It was all I knew. We'd get funny looks from people. My parents tried to educate my sister and me about why people would stare. They would say it was because people were seeing something they hadn't seen before.

PLAYBOY: Kids can be mean. Did you have problems?

JETER: Not many, because I played baseball, which was primarily white. Then I played basketball, which was primarily black. So I had a lot of friends. But I remember going back home after my first year in baseball. I had just bought a Mitsubishi 3000. That was the greatest car in the world. So I was back home, and I was eating out with a friend. We went back to the car and were about to leave when some kids drove by. Someone shouted, g"Bring that car back to your dad" and yelled some racial things. I was so proud to come home, and then you have to hear those kinds of things.

PLAYBOY: Do you feel closer to one race than the other?

JETER: No. My best friend is a white guy I've known since fourth grade. My trainer is Puerto Rican. The catcher on our team, Jorge Posada, is Puerto Rican. I was the best man at his wedding. Sean Twitty, a friend from the minors, is Jamaican.

PLAYBOY: You grew up rooting for the Yankees. Didn't you like the Tigers?

JETER: I was born in Jersey, and I used to spend the summers there because my mom had 13 brothers and sisters, and I had all kinds of cousins. My grandmother was a huge Yankees fan, and she turned me on to the team. Also, my dad liked the Tigers. Since we competed in everything, I couldn't root for the same team he did.

PLAYBOY: You've said you always wanted to play baseball because your dad played.

JETER: He played at Fisk University in Tennessee. Growing up I would watch him play in a softball league.

PLAYBOY: And because he was a shortstop, you had to be a shortstop. Apparently you were clocked throwing 93 mph in high school. Didn't you ever want to be a pitcher?

JETER: I pitched a couple of times in high school, but my arm used to hurt afterward. Plus, I liked to hit. And the shortstop is involved in everything. Shortstop is like quarterback.

PLAYBOY: How much pressure did your dad put on you to excel?

JETER: He never put pressure on me. He always said, g"If you want A, B or C to happen in your life, you have to do certain things. He was tough on us in school. We had to sit down and do our homework for an hour every night. Even if we didn't have homework, we had to sit down and do something school-related for an hour. Obviously it worked. I got good grades.

PLAYBOY: And baseball?

JETER: My mom and dad never pushed me into baseball. For me it was fun. I used to drag them out of the house to help me out. If my dad wasn't home, my mom would throw Wiffle balls in the backyard. The high school was over the back fence, so we'd go to the baseball field. The only thing they said was, g"If you're going to do this, you're going to have to work, and if we don't see you working at it, then it's going to be time for you to find something else to do."

PLAYBOY: You were picked sixth in the 1992 draft. You dreamed of being a Yankee, but wasn't it a long shot that you'd become one?

JETER: It was luck. I mean, the draft is a crapshoot. I thought I'd be selected by Houston or Cincinnati.

PLAYBOY: Speaking of Cincinnati, do you think Pete Rose should be eligible for the Hall of Fame?

JETER: Pete Rose is a Hall of Fame player no matter how you look at it. What he did on the field—there's no question about it. It's just basically how you view what he did off the field. I wouldn't want to be the one to make that decision.

PLAYBOY: After four full seasons with the Yankees you had 795

radar gun.

PLAYBOY: You have less than a second to do that.

you'll see two seams.

over the plate.

pretty sure of yourself. Is that how you really feel?

There are times when you struggle, like I could be 0 for 100, but if a big game is on the line, I expect to do well.

PLAYBOY: Other than Pedro Martinez, which pitcher has given you the most trouble? Someone we might not think of?

JETER: Roy Halladay of Toronto. He had a great year last season, winning the Cy Young Award. But he's always been tough for me. He throws a real hard sinker. Also, Derek Lowe of the Red Sox.

pitched for Toronto.

hate to play against but love to have as a teammate.

Houston too?

to the ballpark around 3:30.

PLAYBOY: Do you have a personal trainer?

East Coast cities.

have to have him come again.

PLAYBOY: You've got [illegible] haven't you played more?

JETER: My shoulder [illegible] had to stop playing golf.

PLAYBOY: Is that why [illegible] der? You've been rubbing it the whole time.

JETER: Really?

PLAYBOY: Does it hurt?

JETER: No. It could be a habit, because it used to hurt all the time. Or it could be old age.

might do after baseball?

JETER: I would love to own a team.

PLAYBOY: Like Michael Jordan? Purchase a percentage of a team?

JETER: No, I'd have to be a majority owner. I'd have to make the decisions.

PLAYBOY: You'd probably need to get your hands on a lot more money.

JETER: Probably.

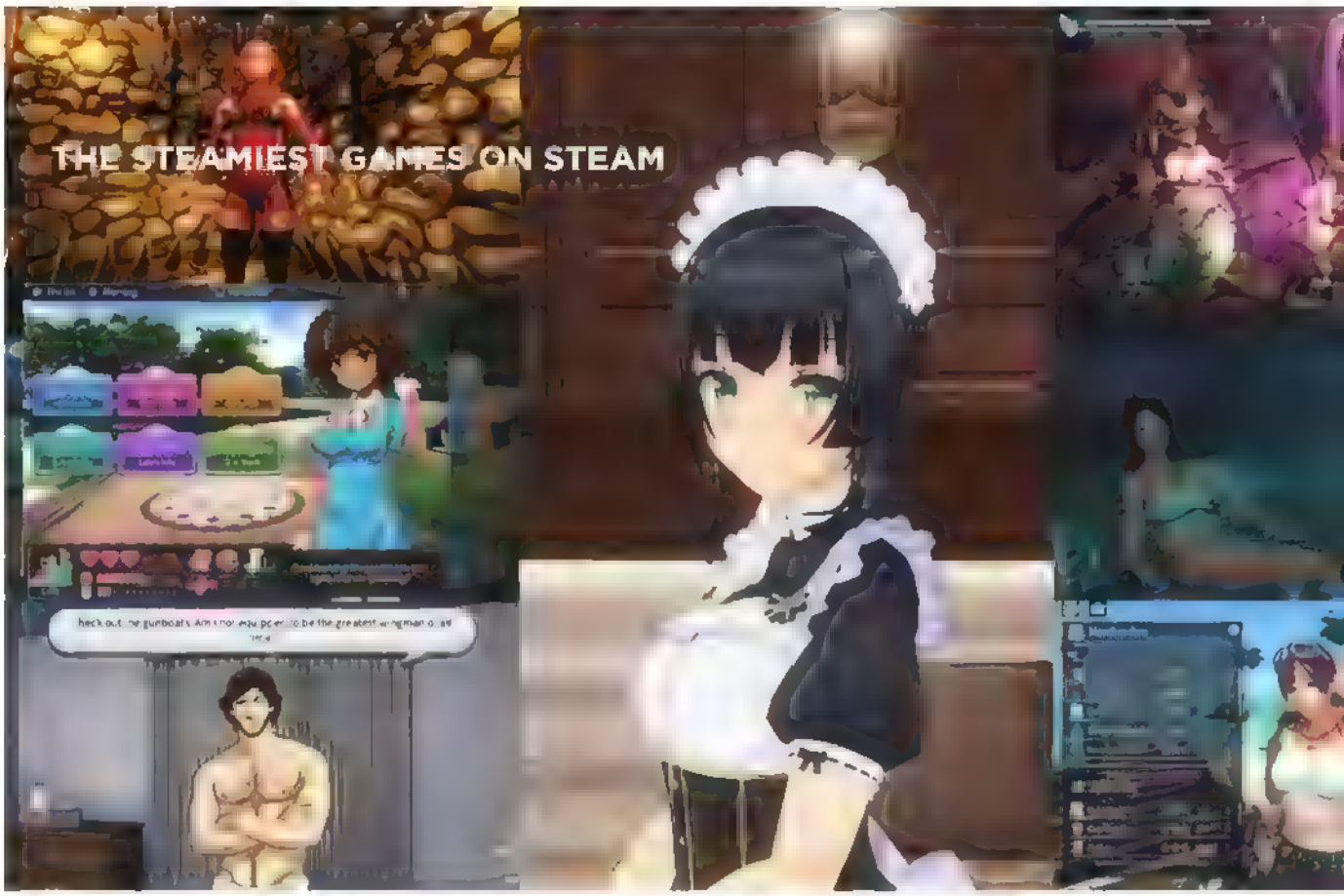
PLAYBOY: How are you going to do that?

JETER: [Smiles] I haven't thought about it yet. But I will.

"If someone comes back a little bigger, the first thing people wonder is, Is he using steroids?"

YORK
NY
TPX

FOR MATURE PLAYERS *ONLY*



From triple-X sex and NSFW fantasy to heart-warming relationships and hilarious dating send-ups, these adult-themed video games will have you coming back for more

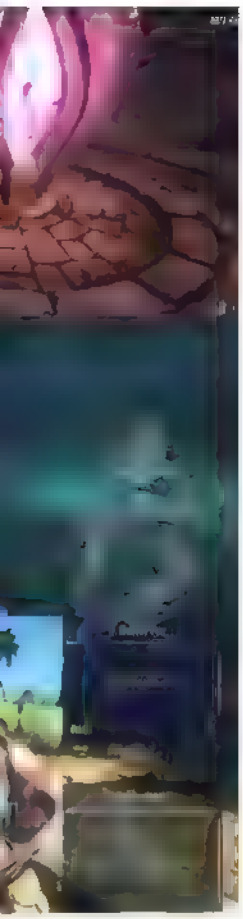
By **BRITTANY VINCENT**

Sure, certain popular blockbuster video games are well-known for dabbling in light sexual situations and romance (looking at you, The Last of Us Part II and The Witcher). But what if you want the really juicy content—explicit sex scenes, jiggly body bits, graphic language—that most triple-A publishers are reluctant to put out?

Steam, the online game platform and storefront, has become a go-to resource for players looking for titles that aren't afraid of a little flesh and action. We're talking full-frontal nudity, explicit story lines and all that delicious adult content you might otherwise seek out via porn. Which games are actually worth your time and money? We waded through a sea of sexy (and not so sexy) titles to bring you a list of some of the most tantalizing titles on the platform.

Boobs Saga

This cheap Dark Souls imitator is a silly, raunchy ride through a series of dungeons with a singular goal, "saving your boobs"



from the evil king. That means your character, a well-endowed young woman (or a furry!), must have sex with demons, avoid traps and navigate vaginal-shaped hallways splattered with, well, you can probably imagine what. Plenty of naked characters in compromising situations litter the gameplay. That this ridiculous concept even exists boggles the mind, but its fun factor is undeniable. Boobs Saga is worth the few bucks for the satirical shock value and amusing juvenile humor alone. ($2.99)

Coming Out on Top

Despite more representation in recent years, LGBTQ-specific story lines and sex scenes still aren't common in the adult gaming landscape. Coming Out on Top, however, has been delivering in droves since its 2014 release. As college senior Mark Matthews, you're ready to come out of the closet and get your date on with 18 different hunks. (A variety of body types are featured, and you can even customize characters' facial and body hair.) You'll come for the crisp, comic-like artwork, but stay for the tasteful and evocative sex scenes that read like some of the best smut you've ever seen. A shining beacon for queer sex in gaming, Coming Out on Top is at the top of any sexy video games list. ($14.99)

HuniePop

What do you get when you cross a match-three puzzler with a dating game featuring seriously sexy babes? HuniePop, which has been delighting players since 2015. Guided by magic love-fairy-cum-wingman Kyu, your mission is to choose a beautiful woman, fall in love and get down and dirty. With your potential partners you'll explore a variety of locations where you'll wine and dine and match wits with the sassy sirens, who must decide whether you're worthy of being allowed into their beds. Imagine Candy Crush Saga crossed with an anime-inspired Bachelor plus explicit scenes. With multiple unique routes, there's always a reason to come back, again and again. ($9.99)

House Party

Madison is having a party, and she insists you attend. Who are you to decline? (After all, other guests include her voluptuous sister, several buff dudes and a friendly porn star.) This cheeky role-playing game lets you pursue more than 25 story branches, including some that end in sexy hookups. Play through each vignette and you may be rewarded with a peek at a banging body or an up-close encounter with one of the hottest people at the party. An erotically charged adventure tinged with humor—"there's a button to take your pants off"—House Party is the way to go for horny gamers responsible enough to avoid actual packed gatherings during the pandemic. How the night plays out is up to you. ($24.99)

Breeders of the Nephelym

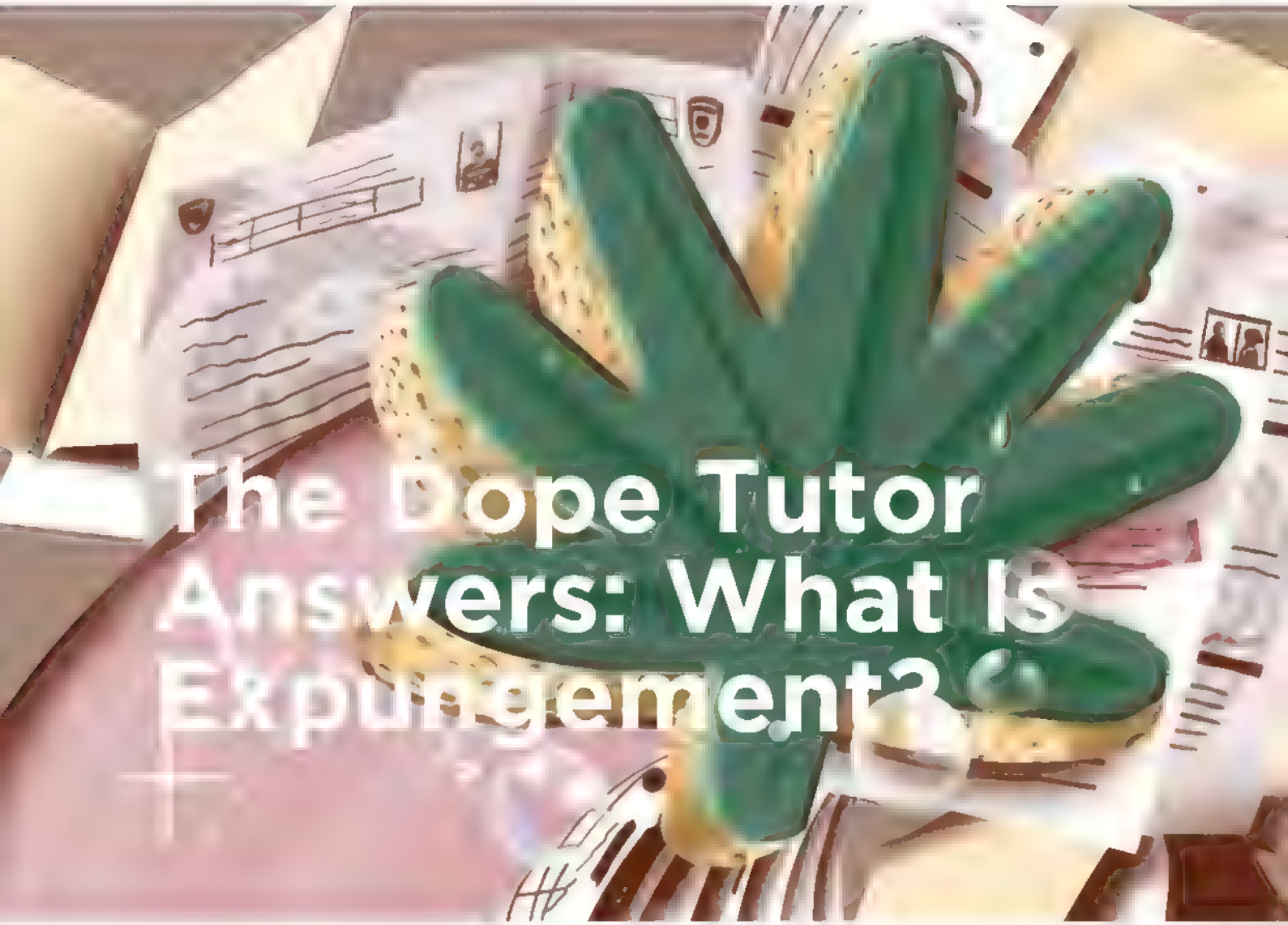
Ah, the animal urge to mate. That drive to breed—no matter with whom or what—is at the center of the fantastical Breeders of the Nephelym. Although the game isn't especially good, it is totally sexy and entertaining. Enter a 3D world where you have to capture Nephelym, monster-human hybrids who are all about mating. To restore peak fertility to the land, you must engage in penetrative or oral sex with these lustful creatures, or breed the Nephelym with each other via a variety of animated positions and combinations. Players must keep lust levels up, strategically bring Nephelym to climax and harvest milk and semen, among other things. Yes, it's absurd, but there's never a dull moment in this adventure. (Free)

AI Shoujo

Picture this: You're stuck on an island paradise with a gorgeous woman whose physical features and wardrobe are up to you. As she comes to life, she learns to think on her own as you interact with her and your tropical surroundings. Before you know it, she's falling in love. Between roaming, gathering and other island necessities, you'll also be getting it on. Naturally, this requires plenty of flirting and ensuring that her needs are met. If you put in the work, you can eventually give and receive pleasure, including watching multiple characters go at it—way more interactive than a Giga Pet. ($69.99)

Custom Order Maid 3D 2: It's a Night Magic

Ever wish you had a live-in maid? Or were in charge of a bevy of beautiful maids? Maids who might tidy in various states of undress? Welcome to the Empire Club, where the room service is at your discretion. Custom Order Maid 3D 2: It's a Night Magic gives you the next best thing to an IRL scenario: VR. To see all the explicit content you'll need to purchase the 18+ pass, but if you're looking to spend some time with beautiful anime-style characters who like posing in cutesy maid outfits (or in nothing at all) in virtual reality, it's worth the entry price. Just don't expect your own bedroom to be any cleaner when you're done playing with these maids. ($40, Japanese-language with English subtitles.)



The Dope Tutor Answers: What Is Expungement?

Despite shifts toward cannabis legalization, many Americans live with the burden of weed-related criminal records

BY
ANDREW DEANGELO

ILLUSTRATION BY
RICHARD A. CHANCE

Many thousands of people are serving time in American jails and prisons for cannabis offenses that today would not be considered crimes. And those who have already served their time must deal with the further injustice of having a permanent criminal record attached to their names for weed-related infractions. One way to alleviate this burden is through expungement—erasing these convictions from a person's record. Although expungement as a concept covers more than just cannabis offenses, wiping the slate clean for those Americans whose offenses are no longer even considered crimes seems like common sense, right?

As we have experienced in the past several months, common sense does not seem to apply to the way in which we administer justice in this country. The U.S. criminal justice system is broken, especially for people who happen to be black or brown. When most people enter "the system," they're in a world beyond their control, thrown into an often torturous environment and cut off from work, money and family. They may not have resources

to make bail before their trial starts or after it, during an appeal. Generally, it's easier to get into jail than it is to get out.

If a person does make bail and is released, they might then fail a drug test (likely for weed), which puts them right back in the system. Or maybe they managed to stop smoking weed, but got into a car with a friend who, unbeknownst to them, was holding weed—bam, back to jail. There are literally hundreds of ways a person could be sent back to jail while out on bail.

To even make bail in the first place—especially for cannabis and nonviolent drug offenses—can be challenging, even for those who have property to use as collateral for the bond. I've seen bail set at $250,000 for possession with intent to distribute relatively small amounts of weed, only to see someone accused of rape have bail set at $25,000. It sounds crazy, but it's true. And this happens in the name of justice.

Once a person is convicted of a crime, the only way to reverse the judgment is on appeal. Most appeals fail. Once all appeals have been exhausted, the only way to get out of prison is through an act of clemency from a governor or the president, which is extremely rare. Out of nearly 2.3 million citizens serving time, only a few thousand will be granted any kind of clemency in any given year. Politicians are reluctant to grant clemency or pardons because it is perceived as politically risky. Keeping people locked up for cannabis is seen as less risky than granting them clemency—how tragic is that?

People who were busted in the U.S. for weed before it was legalized are in an unjust no-man's land. Their offense is no longer considered a crime, but they are still serving time—sometimes decades behind bars—for weed. Prior convictions, mandatory sentencing and multiple-offender laws (not to mention systemic racism) can add many years to these sentences—even bringing the sentence to life in prison.

Those offenders who do their time and get out still must contend with a permanent record that attaches to them like a ball and chain. Try to get an apartment? The formerly incarcerated could be denied due to their criminal record. Try to get a job? Denied. Try to get a student loan? Denied. What can happen when someone is denied the ability to survive? They might resort to crime and end up in jail again with an even longer sentence, and the cycle repeats.

The good news is there's help on the way for citizens languishing in prison for cannabis offenses and those who are out and dealing with cannabis records. The Last Prisoner Project (which I co-founded), Cage-Free Cannabis and other nonprofits are raising money, hiring attorneys, petitioning governors and even trying to get the Trump administration to release cannabis prisoners during the Covid-19 pandemic.

These efforts have yielded modest results, and several prisoners have been freed. Building on this momentum is critical for future success. There will be no justice for the cannabis community until all our prisoners have been freed, records have been expunged and support has been given for reintegration into society. It's the least that can be done for citizens who should never have been locked up in the first place.

There will be no justice for the cannabis community until all our prisoners have been freed, records have been expunged and support has been given for reintegration into society.

Photography by **Rocky Batchelor | @rockybatchelor**

Happy to have you on the cover of Playboy! Can you tell us what the inspiration behind this photoshoot was? What inspired me was the opportunity and desire to capture such a fun time in my life.

Best place you have ever been to in the world? It is hard to pick the best place because there are so many unique amazing places I have seen. But Whistler in Canada holds a special place in my heart.

What are some of your biggest dreams you hope to achieve? My biggest dream is to create a happy sustainable life where I can focus on my goal at that time, and be surrounded by family and friends like spending time with friends and family, reading, and exercising to decompress.

Who has been the most influential person in your life and why? I couldn't pick one influential person, it would have to be my family and my best friend. They are my community that supports me and influence me.

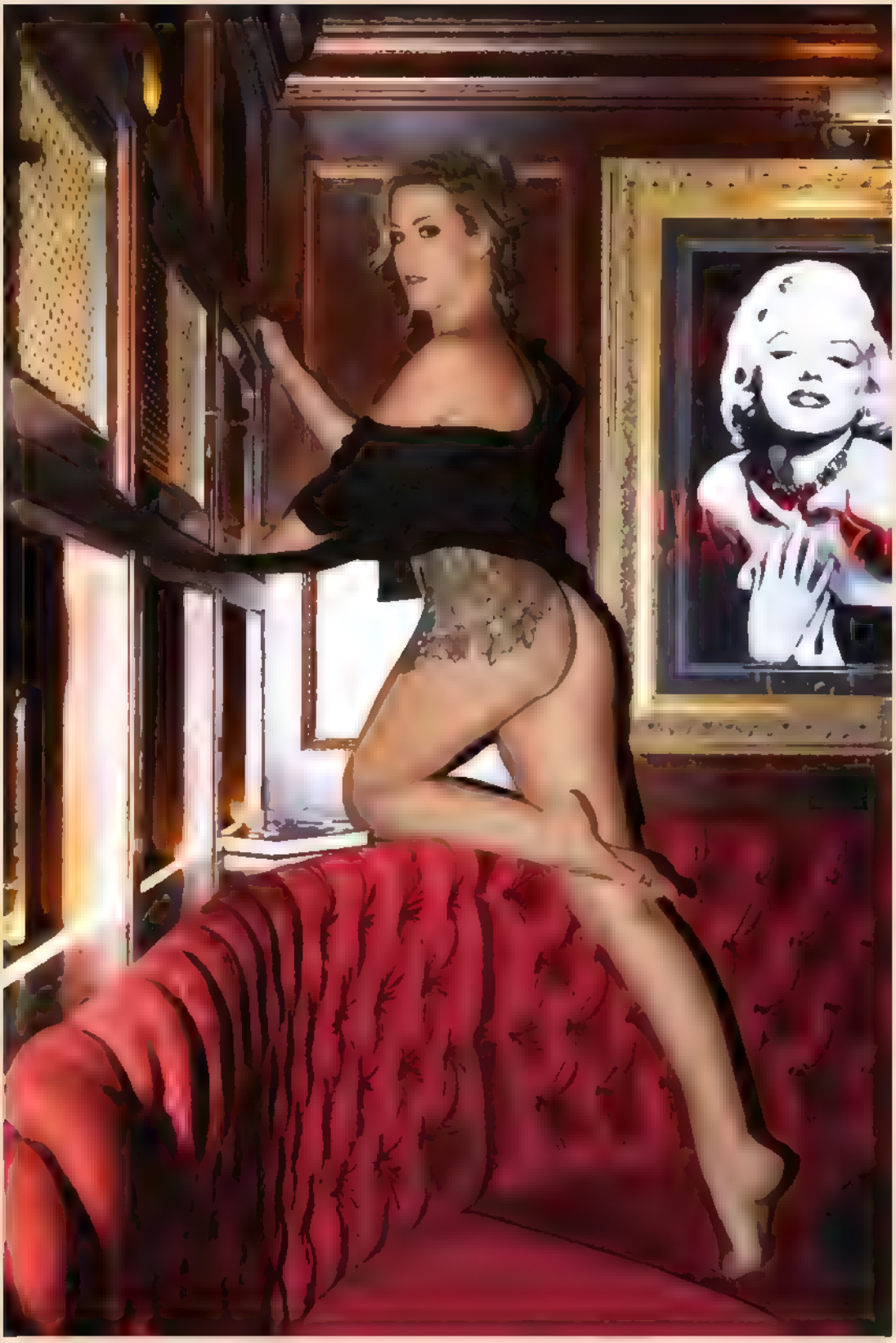
How romantic are you? I'm probably not the most romantic person, but do still love the gestures.

What makes you the ultimate partner to have? The ultimate partner is someone who supports me and my goals and equally allows me to do the same for them. Also have to have good communication skills Sex is the foundation of a good relationship, so very important.

What is your idea of a really good time? My idea of a good time is going out and exploring or finding somewhere new.

Any word of advice to fans on the right way to approach you? Just be confident and yourself when approaching me. I'm always happy to meet new people.

Thanks for taking the time to speak to us, any last words to our readers? Thank you, Playboy, for the opportunity to work with you and for everyone reading.

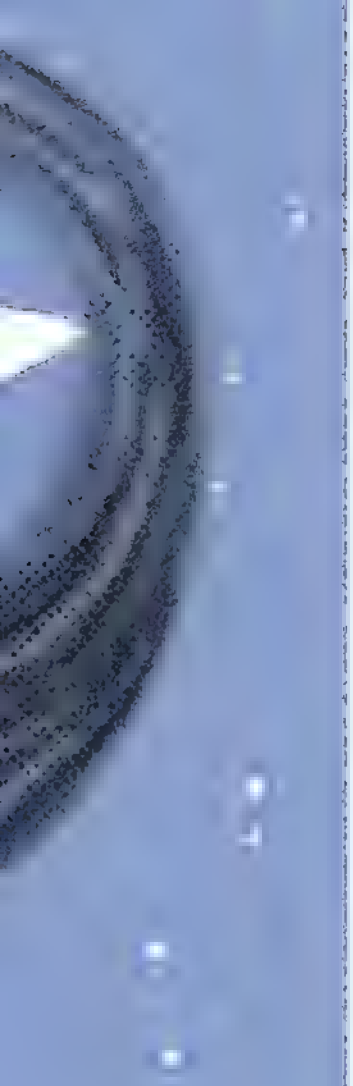


WEED WARRIOR

TRANSFORMING THE IMPOSSIBLE INTO THE INEVITABLE

When it comes to the quest for legal weed, never taking "no" for an answer has been the key to ending cannabis prohibition

BY **ANDREW DEANGELO** ILLUSTRATION BY **ROB STITES**



For as long as I can remember, I've been an idealist. Even as a child, I thought anything was possible. Case in point: After my parents split up when I was in kindergarten, I always believed they'd get back together—or, at the very least, forgive each other. They never did.

At age 15, I got bit by two bugs at once: theater and cannabis. I was convinced I'd not only become the next Jack Nicholson but would also legalize weed along the way. Throughout college and graduate school I worked hard at both.

From the start, I was told legalizing weed would be, by far, the more difficult of these dreams. Impossible was the word used by my parents, professors, peers and society as a whole. Yet as it happens, it was the dream of becoming a movie star that eluded me, despite a lot of hard work and effort, and not my efforts to end cannabis prohibition.

I enjoyed cannabis and I was good at trading it. My acting skills enabled me to hide my ventures well from the world and, for the most part, not get caught. My athletic skills (I'd wanted to be a pro tennis player but had been sidelined by injuries) gave me endurance and discipline few weed dealers had. But I hated being a criminal, so I invested my profits and worked with others to change cannabis laws.

For many years we made little progress. The war on drugs was all the rage. Even the Democrats were tripping over themselves to lock people up for weed—and for long sentences, with no hope of change in sight.

But I kept at it, my family kept at it, the movement kept at it and in the early to mid-1990s, we began to break the grip of cannabis prohibition. The tipping point came in San Francisco in the midst of the AIDS crisis. During our darkest moment of enduring that virus, our community discovered just how powerful a medicine cannabis can be. We shared that story with the world, and modern medical cannabis was born. Twenty years later we did it again with easing the suffering of epileptic children, allowing even the most conservative communities around the world to embrace medical cannabis.

The journey was brutally hard and, in many respects, continues to be. Cannabis legalization has not yet occurred on the federal level and has not rolled out smoothly at the state level. It turns out creating regulatory and tax frameworks for cannabis after nearly 100 years of prohibition is damn near impossible—at least, that's what we've been told as we've clamored and clawed for a less absurd and more logical system. Advocates in the cannabis community know it's not impossible; on the contrary, regulating and taxing cannabis should be a helluva lot easier than enforcing prohibition. And yet whenever we present rational solutions for legalization, we're once again confronted with that phrase we've heard for generations. But that would be impossible. Time will tell if we can outmaneuver politicians shoving impossible down our throats and activate the inevitable promise of affordable access to cannabis for all.

Our type of impossible is not the same kind of impossible as ending slavery or Jim Crow, restoring Native American rights, women's rights, legalizing gay marriage or any number of other movements whose shoulders we stand upon. Our movement is unique but similar to these other movements in that our mission is so aligned with the moral arc of the universe that the outcome is inevitable, not impossible.

Our mission is so aligned with the moral arc of the universe that the outcome is inevitable, not impossible.

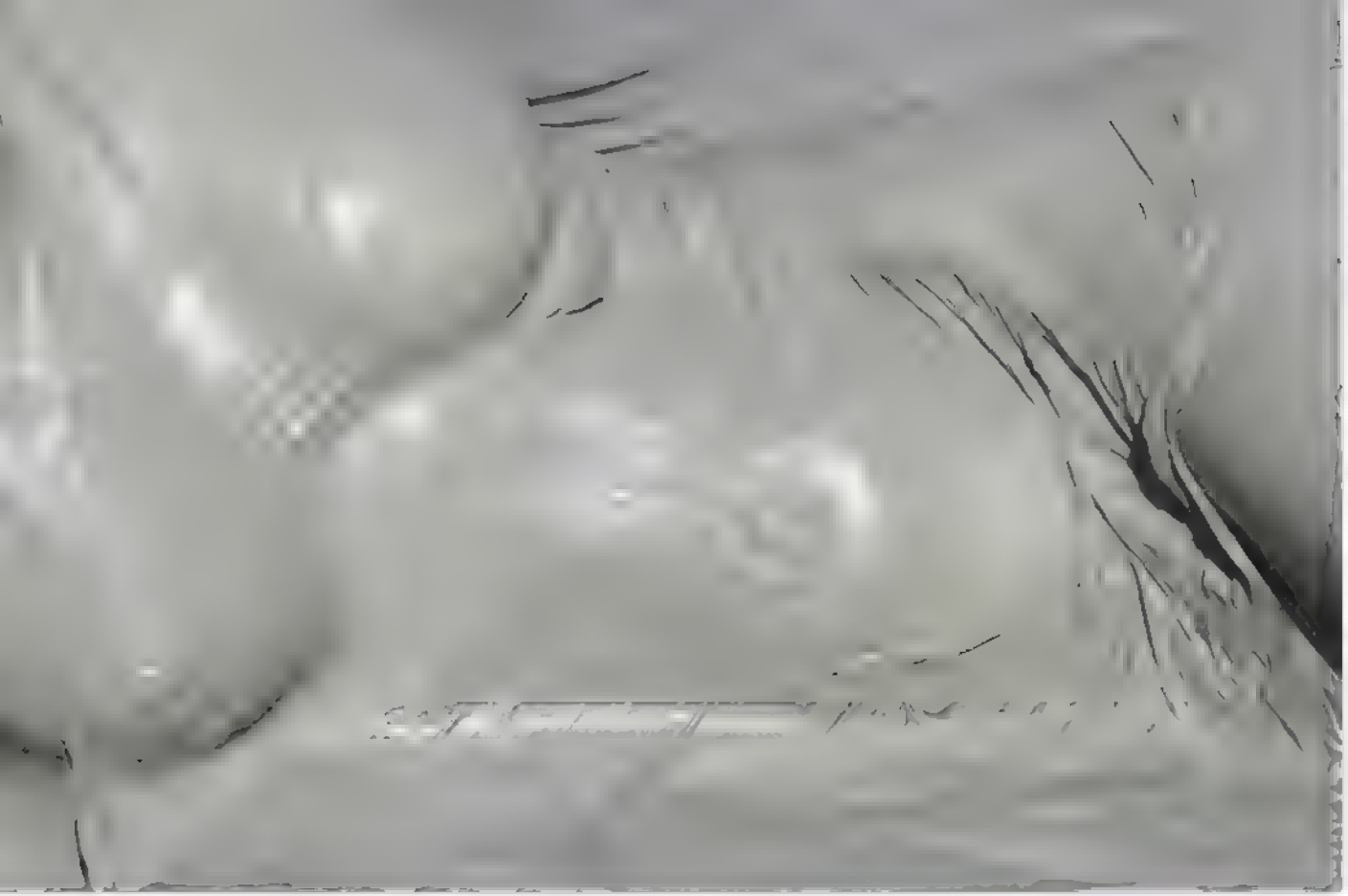
Today a very different virus from the one that first spurred a wider embrace of medical cannabis decades ago is affecting everyone around the world. Lo and behold, seemingly impossible things are coming to life all around us. Shut down the U.S. economy? Possible. Pass a massive economic stimulus? Possible. Stop consuming so much oil and fossil fuels? Possible. Put human life first and money second? Possible.

At long last, after a lifetime of this insanity, the world is finally catching up and seeing just how possible impossible is when we want it badly enough.

Dive Into the Sweet and Uncomfortable World of *Honey and Prue*

BY LIZ SUMAN

reimagining
conventional
representations
of beauty and
sexuality



Body Pour

For collaborators and friends Honey Long and Prue Stent, intimacy and anonymity often mean the same thing. The photographers' immersive images feature juicy blue tongues smashed together, lush body parts drenched in wet pink fabric and naked, faceless bodies dancing behind a filmy green screen.

Whether soaking a torso in gray paint or concealing a subject in a field of lily pads, the Australia-based artists are masters of blending vivid colors and tactile materials with nudity and nature, using these juxtapositions as tools to recast classic representations of beauty and sexuality in unexpected ways. The viewer is left with a visceral, sometimes uncomfortable sense of intimacy that's heightened by the fact that their subjects are unidentifiable.

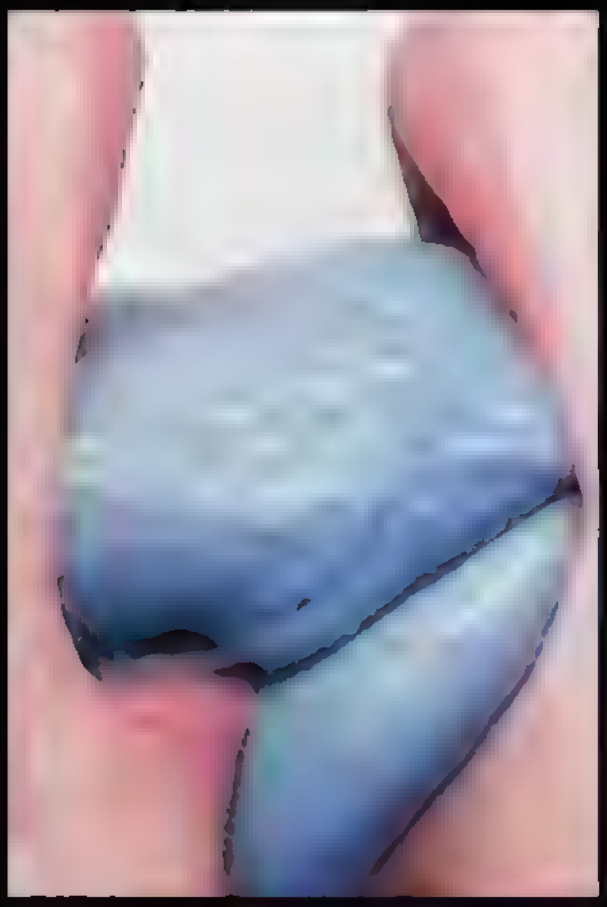
The artists' latest body of work is no exception. "Textural screens entice the viewer while also distancing them from the subjects so that they remain elusive," says the pair of their new exhibit, Touching Pool, currently on view at Arc One Gallery in Melbourne and pictured below. "For us, this creates a sense of suspended desire—like viewing lifeforms in an aquarium. You want to be in their world, but all you can do is press yourself against the glass."

For a multisensory viewing experience, play the exhibit's audio accompaniment, "Touching Poo," by Honey Long and Prue Stent, produced by Chris Ellis.

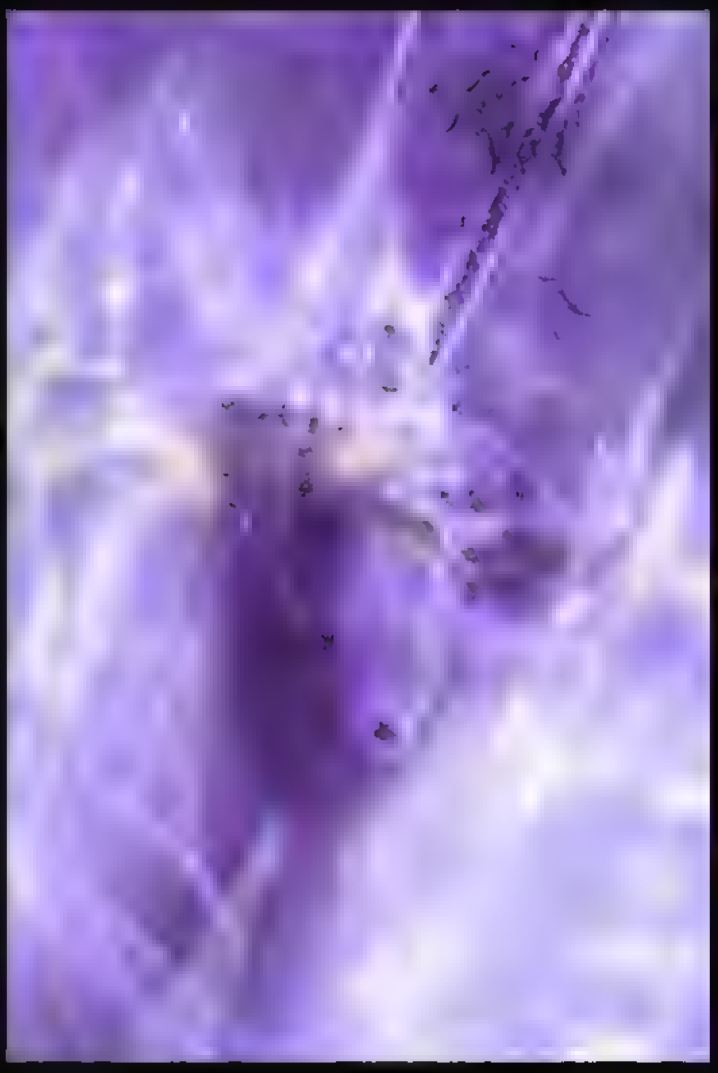
Milk Sap

Frang pan Float

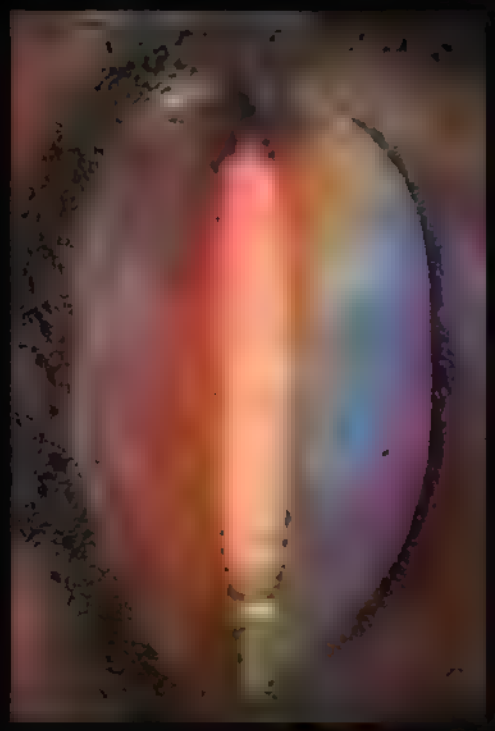
Scented Gel



Blue Tongue

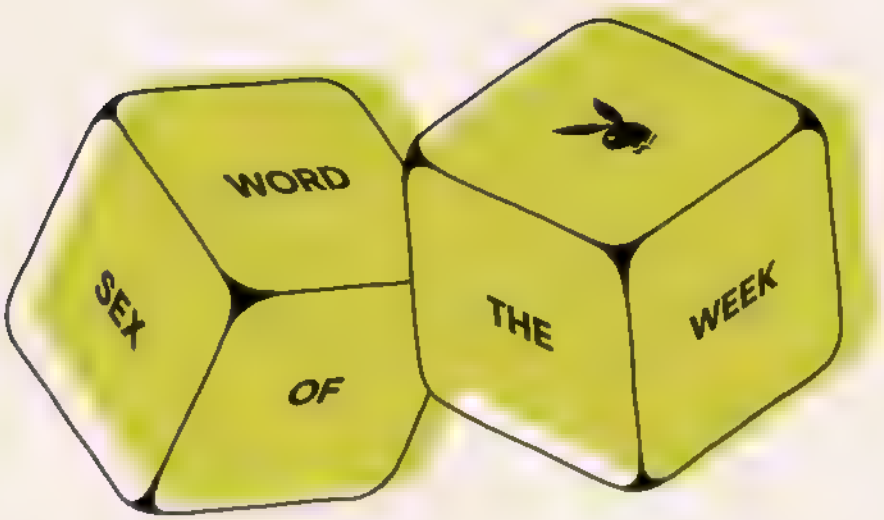


Water Trace



Surface Tension

Night Garden



WAP

WRITTEN BY
ANITA LITTLE

ILLUSTRATIONS BY
KATIE BAILIE

If your libidinous mind can imagine it, there's probably already a term for it

WAP (*n*) wet-ass pussy, a vagina that is of great renown and status

Cardi B and Megan Thee Stallion's latest joint, m"WAP," went viral over the weekend, debuting at number one on both Spotify and iTunes.

This week's word is a doozy, so hopefully you brought a bucket and a mop. If you spent even a nanosecond of your life online this past weekend, you likely witnessed the song p"WAP" become the women's empowerment anthem we didn't realize we needed. If you successfully avoid the internet at all costs, good for you! But to catch you up, WAP now stands for "wet-ass pussy." (Sorry, Wireless Access Point and Weatherization Assistance Program, your time in the sun has come to an end.) "WAP" is the latest single from rap goddesses Cardi B and Megan Thee Stallion, and upon its release on Friday it topped charts, with the accompanying music video racking up 72 million views.

To have a WAP is to have a punani of prestige, one that doesn't tolerate fuckboys or ignored texts or p"faking it" to preserve delicate egos. A WAP's sole mission is pleasure, and it seeks it out on its own terms unapologetically. Women, particularly black women, shouldn't have to sanitize their sexualities to make them more palatable or respectable. This song is a lyrical defense of a woman's right to be nasty. Cardi B said as much in a recent interview: "The song is really nasty. The song always been nasty. It was really hard for me to clean this song up." There you go, folks.

And WAP above all else, stands for an idea—the idea of women being confident in their bodies and wielding their sexual power. To interpret it metaphorically, possessing a WAP is to have full sexual agency at all times. So if you happen to have the opposite of a WAP—a DAP, if you will (which is a normal, common thing, every vagina is different and there's nothing wrong with needing extra help when it comes to lubrication!)—this mantra is still for you, and you have every right to belt it out to the chagrin of any old conservative who might be in earshot.

Powerful & Sensual
NADIA
PALIK

What an absolute honor to have you! Thank you. The honor is mine. It was always my dream to be on the cover of a Playboy magazine and although I have taken photos for Playboy in another country, being on the cover of this edition of Playboy is a dream for me.

How do you like to start the day? I like to start the day very early and then go to breakfast at my favorite places. The reality is that I have a hard time getting up early so I almost always end up going to breakfast late, I really enjoy sitting down to drink coffee on the side and then go for a walk in nature.

What's the most exciting hobby or interest you've pursued recently and how did you get into it? One of the activities I enjoy the most is taking pilates and stretching classes. I always do the physical activity but recently I started with stretching and I get excited, I also like to take dance classes every so often as it connects me with my femininity and makes me feel powerful and sensual.

If you could spend a day doing whatever you wanted, what would your ideal day look like? I love the relaxing days when I dedicate myself completely. I do beauty treatments, go to the spa, then in the afternoon go shopping and in the evening a beautiful dinner in a nice place. I think those are my ideal days.

What's one project or goal you're currently working on that really excites you? My goal is to continue traveling and knowing countries, I think I'm already more than 70! In addition to that, I am with various business projects and investments that are something new to me.

What's the most memorable date you've been on and what made it stand out? It is difficult to choose one since I must admit that my suitors were always very good and creative, I can not complain. A recent appointment that was very special was a dinner by the sea on a private paradise beach, the table was in the sand, and it was all decorated with candles and flowers. Dining with the sound of the ocean was a unique experience.

Are there any qualities or traits you find particularly attractive in a partner? What do you value most? I find very attractive men who generate admiration for me, who are intelligent, successful in what they do, who like to be with the family, and who have a quiet lifestyle. What I value most is loyalty. I like men who are true gentlemen.

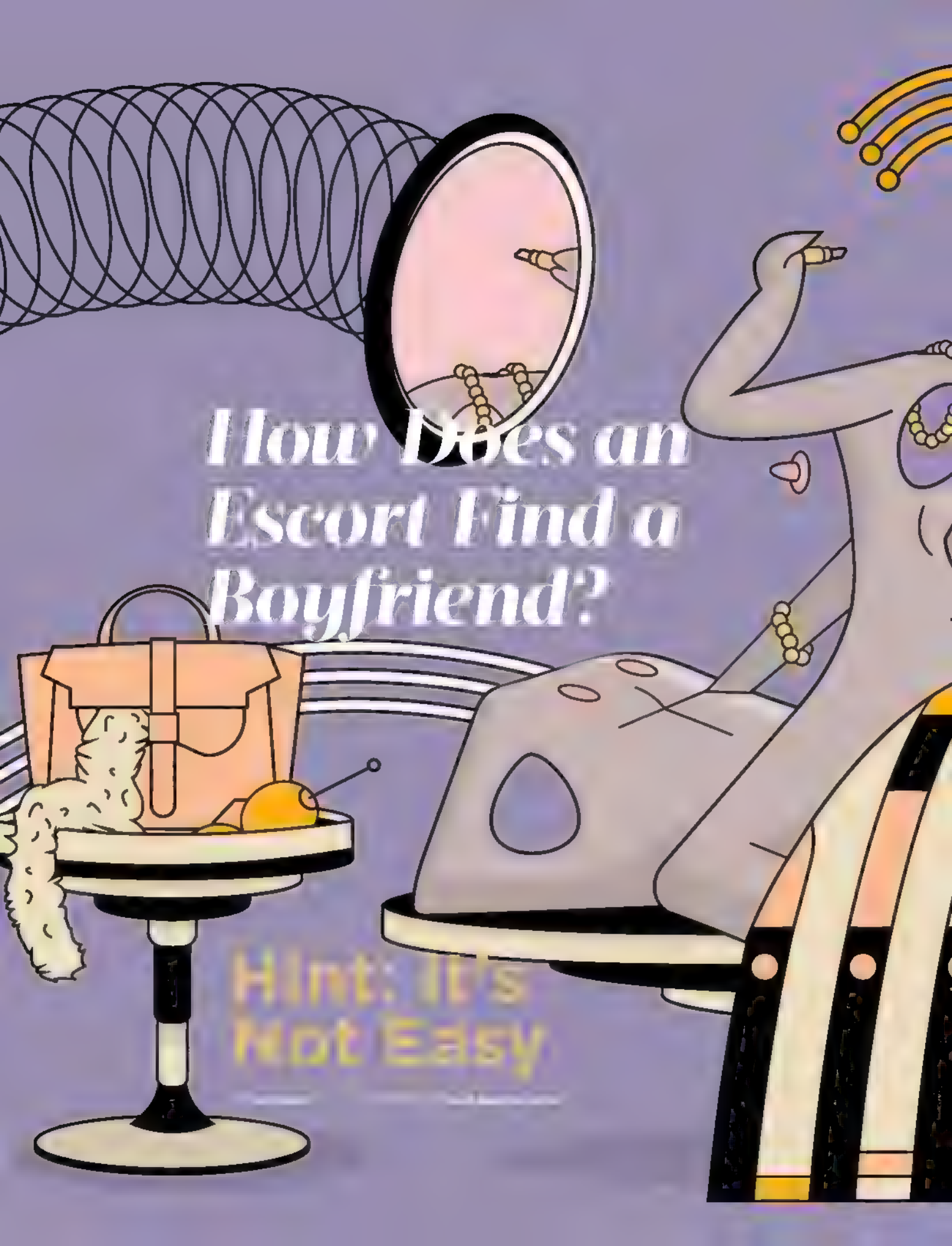
Who has been your biggest inspiration or role model in your personal or professional life? I never had professional references or anyone I admired too much. I feel that my biggest inspiration since I was a child was myself, I overcame the difficult moments of my childhood alone, I always had a clear mind, I was always very demanding and I achieved all my goals. Mentally I feel unshakable.

What do you enjoy most about your hobbies or interests outside of work? Without a doubt what I enjoy most is spending time with my family and loved ones, I am a super family person.

How do you find a balance between your personal life and your career? I was always a very balanced person, I was never overwhelmed by work since I always made time for myself. At present I must say that most of my time is dedicated to me, to enjoy, to travel.

How do you stay motivated and overcome challenges in your work? I am always motivated because I always have new ideas, I always do new things, I always have some project or dream to fulfil that keeps me focused and motivated. I never get bored.

Where can our readers catch up with you and stay up to date with your work? The social network that I use the most is Instagram, you can follow me and see more about my life @nadiapalik.


How Does an Escort Find a Boyfriend?
Hint: It's Not Easy

It was a balmy August night in New York City and Maggie couldn't recall the last time she'd felt butterflies. In a strappy blue dress, DKNY tennis sneakers and her brown hair in a ponytail, she'd walked the 14 blocks from her apartment to the north end of Union Square, where she began scanning the crowd. It didn't take long to find Rich. Sitting on a bench in jeans and a paisley shirt, Rich, a graphic designer, looked just like he had in his pictures: dark spiked hair, angular features, a preternaturally youthful 32-year-old. Maggie smiled. As they set off to grab a drink, the chemistry was as immediate and intense as it had been on the phone for the past week. When they got to the wine bar, he opened the door for her, wiped down the table. Compared to her last relationship—two months with a self-absorbed cinematographer—Rich was a thrilling breath of fresh air.

when a potential romantic partner can't recognize that a blow job is just a job? A year in the lives of high-end escorts as they navigate the snaking line between work and love

As they talked and laughed, effortlessly, Maggie felt that no matter the connection, her career would be an issue. After a very religious middle-class childhood in the Bay Area, Maggie became a high-end provider, a.k.a. an escort, a sex worker—someone who charges upward of $1,000 an hour for services. The 30-year-old vegetarian is a classic beauty, an astrology-obsessed empath and she is unwaveringly proud of her profession. But as the fight for sex-work

more personal, constant struggle: dating, relationships and love.

Although the job perks include Michelin-star meals, first-class flights to exotic locations and cash—lots of cash—the life of a provider is often isolating. Emotionally draining. Occasionally traumat-

the vast spectrum of sex workers who engage in prostitution, a line of work that includes multiple class strata and myriad genders. Nor are they victims of trafficking or beholden to pimps. The choice to enter the business was, and still is, their own. And as glamorous as

culture story lines.

"Mainstream society at large is able to romant

says Bre, a 28-year-old New Yorker who's been in the business for five years. "We look at [sex work] as the most beautiful, tragic love stories that ever can exist, and I hate the way all of them end. She gets saved, or she dies on the block."

But all the women interviewed for this story made one point very clear: The longer they remain in the business, the more they tend to understand the importance of a partner. The more many of them crave some sort of relationship.

"I have a monogamous mentality," says Maggie. "And just because we're sex workers doesn't mean we don't want love any less than anyone else."

Finding a significant other in the modern age is hard enough for anyone, let alone someone who has sex for a living. But providers are well aware of the challenge.

"It's complicated," admits Magg . "You just have to bolster yourself for the ensuing battle."

So how do high-end providers meet potential paramours? No differently than most single people these days: dating apps like Bumble, Tinder, OkCupid and Hinge (where Maggie matched with Rich). The process, however, can be tricky. For obvious legal reasons, providers rarely reveal what they do for work on a dating profile. And since the apps are relatively sparse on personal information, escorts have to navigate around men who might react poorly to their profession. Red flags range from conservative politics to pictures from church functions to anyone who appears too buttoned up. Photos from Burning Man, kink pics and other progressive-alternative signals are encouraging. The most reliable app appears to be OkCupid, where members customarily provide more in-depth profiles.

"You can post questions related to sex work and get lots of good information," says Krista, a 37-year-old provider. "You can know ahead of time if they might be hostile or unpleasant about it."

Being a provider who's also a woman of color can lend another level of awareness to the process of vetting potential partners. "You have big double consciousness," says Bre. "I know that black women are hypersexualized, how does that work when you want to form a relationship with someone where you want to be your full self, but you also don't want that full self to be misrepresented or misinterpreted? Then add on the difficulty of being a sex worker, where, by virtue of the job, you are commodifying your sexuality. It's this really weird space, where you're having a conversation with a partner, and as a woman you need to figure out 'Is he a misogynist?' And as a black woman, you have to ask, 'Is he going to be misogynistic and rac

Once they've waded into the dating pool, the next step is like diving headfirst into the deep end. Time for

"I've tried every thing. I've been blunt, I've been delicate. I've asked if they've seen 'Pretty Woman'."

"the talk." Coming clean with what they do for a living. "I couldn't have someone who didn't know what I did," says Sara, a 28-year-old escort. She isn't alone. Some high-end escorts tell those closest to them—friends, family—and this would obviously include a partner.

So it's not as much if they break the news to a potential boyfriend as when. "Definitely not the first date," laughs Maggie. "That's way too much information. But all girls have different comfort levels." Developing those comfort levels can take time; trust needs to build. But waiting too long has pitfalls as well. "I don't want to be one or two months in," she says, "then admit I've lied the whole time and this is what I actually do." With Rich, their instant rapport actually prompted Maggie to tell him over text before their first date.

How then to share this information? Again, every situation and every provider varies. "I've tried everything," explains Sara, who's been a provider for nearly three years. "I've been blunt, I've been delicate, I've asked if they've seen Pretty Woman." With one of her exes, she described herself as a "well-compensated, low-volume companion." Maggie prefers not to beat around the bush. "I say I'm in the sex industry," she says. "Then guys say, 'What does that mean?' I try to explain the job. But I ask, 'Look, how much do you want to know?'"

Rich wanted to know a lot. He wasn't at all like the guy who'd called Maggie a "cum bucket" when she'd told him. Or the guy who said, "You must really know how to fuck a man." Or the guy who screamed, "You're going to give me HIV!" Still, sometimes Rich's inquisitiveness concerned Maggie. Regular inquiries about her clients' dick sizes, asking if she genuinely enjoyed having sex with these men. But they worked through it. Their lives became more and more intertwined. Within a few months Maggie felt "all the bs was gone," and they were building a foundation. She was in love.

"I don't care how cool he is; for the next 30 years his line at the end of an argument will always be, 'You're a fucking whore.'"

Krista met Vic at a party in Brooklyn. They too had instant attraction. Who could blame them? The redheaded Krista grew up in a Southern California suburb, matriculated to an Ivy League college and possessed a fierce passion for politics and feminism. Vic was a tech consultant from South America, sharp and witty—that dry humor Krista adored. She'd felt so comfortable with him that on their first date she told him she was a sex worker.

"He said, 'Okay,'" recalls Krista. They quickly became an item and Vic proved to be warm and emotionally supportive.

What Vic wasn't, was jealous. "He had no curiosity about work," says Krista, "I don't think he saw much use in knowing. My assumption was he thought, I know what sex looks like." Her theory is that certain people—herself included—aren't biologically programmed with sexual jealousy. "You can tell if they are, fast," Krista adds. "They try to hide it, but they still ask questions to scratch that itch."

Someone like Vic is a rare find, because the work is all about sex. Despite the "escort" connotations, Krista isn't simply accompanying some lonely gentleman to the theater and then heading home. She's sleeping with (primarily) older, married, wealthy men. Those bookings might include the theater or dinner at Eleven Madison Park or a week in Tuscany, but regardless of the trappings, the modern day high-end provider is still practicing the world's oldest profession.

But no matter the programming, falling for someone can make the job excruciating. Especially during the "honeymoon" period of a new relationship. Providers talk about the euphoria of that first weekend with a new partner, living in a cloud of dopamine and serotonin, not thinking about eating or drinking, the two of them just lying in bed all day. Inevitably, explains Krista, that e-mail arrives. A job. Krista tried a variety of ways to cope. Sometimes she'd think of Vic while having sex with a client. Other times she completely blocked Vic out of her mind. "I never came up with an optimal way," she admits.

While the providers grudgingly go to work, they all attest that the sex with clients is nothing like it is at home. They use words like performative, robotic and perfunctory to describe "work sex." That's not to say it's bad, especially with clients they like, but it's not real. "I get to have orgasms," says one escort who asked not to be named. "But they're empty." Intimacy with significant others is genuine, connective and, maybe most important, healing.

"But it can get weird," says Bre about having a significant other who knows what she does for a living. Example: "You're super tired, and they're like, 'How was work?' 'Oh, it was great. I pissed in a champagne cup and then this guy drank it.' And they're like, 'Would you want to try that with me?' I'm like, 'No!'"

Which is not to say that sex in their personal lives is boring. Surprisingly, most providers say they're far kinkier with their loved ones than with the men paying them. In addition to partners providing a safer space for experimentation, the real thrill for many clients is the mere idea of an escort. "I'm actually vanilla with my clients," says Suzanne, a 27-year-old escort working toward her MBA. None of her clients ask to explore sexual fantasies with her "because I'm the fantasy. Not the sex acts."

During their first year together, Krista can't remember a single argument with Vic. They fit perfectly, their life together was easy. One night, while they cooked dinner at her apartment, Vic told Krista he loved her. She laughed.

"I was like, 'I've known I've loved you for months.'"

When Josie started escorting three and a half years ago, she looked at it as a refreshing "time out" from the dating scene. The 41-year-old from Montreal loathed the apps and thought the guys in New York City only wanted to get laid. Not only was she able to focus on her health, wellness and meditation practices, but setting up a business as an independent escort required a hell of a lot of trial and error, a process she couldn't exactly google. "There's a lot to figure out that first year," laughs one escort. "You're learning on your feet—and your back." But as Josie got established and developed a steady clientele, she started to sense a common void.

"I wanted that intimacy," she admits. "That partner, that companionship."

Yet Josie was reluctant. Unlike many high-end providers, she didn't want to reveal her identity. Didn't feel comfortable doing it. On dates, she claimed she was divorced or in fitness training or didn't need to work. "People don't really ask questions based on that answer," she says. The covers proved effective, although Josie realized they undermined her entire purpose. "I know I'm going to have to lie to somebody," she says. "And what's the point of dating someone with a prospect of a possible future when you start it with a lie?"

Then, through a social media account—one that used her real identity—she connected with Alan, a TV producer. He lived in Atlanta. She had friends there she regularly visited. One night they met for margaritas in Buckhead, and soon she was flying to Georgia every few weeks. They had long dinners, went to Braves games and both liked trying different things in the bedroom.

Weeks turned into months, yet still Josie didn't disclose her livelihood. Not without good reason. Revealing that information—particularly their work aliases—can throw unsuspecting men for a serious loop.

Take Maggie. Her boyfriend Rich looked up her website, Twitter feed and Instagram account. While Maggie didn't brag about lavish trips and pricey gifts from clients like many high-end providers, she did post racy selfies. She offered a "girlfriend experience" as well as duos with other female escorts. Rich wanted to know why she never sent him any nude selfies, why she didn't act that adventurous when they were together. She tried to explain that social media was all smoke and mirrors. The duos with other escorts came with the job, it wasn't who she was.

"He felt threatened," Maggie recalls. "He felt like I was pretending with him. That it wasn't real."

As if that wasn't incendiary enough, some escorts (including Josie) post client reviews on their websites—detailed accounts of their high-priced assignations. Highly complimentary? Without question. But the lurid play-by-play might send even the least sexually jealous boyfriend into an apoplectic rage.

Sometimes telling the truth can be simply dangerous. Maggie cites an evening when a date she'd recently told came close to assaulting her. Several providers mentioned escorts who'd been outed by angry exes on infamous gossip website the Dirty. Suzanne will never forget the warning she once got from the owner of an escort agency where she once worked.

"He told me, 'Never tell anyone,'" she says. "'Because I don't care how cool he is, for the next 30 years his line at the end of an argument will always be, You're a fucking whore.'"

After eight months commuting to Atlanta, Josie's relationship with Alan came to a head. "At what point am I going to have to tell this person or get out?" laments Josie. "It came to that. I either do or I don't. I didn't."

Josie called Alan and broke it off. She blamed the distance.

For several months, Maggie and Rich sailed smoothly. They traveled to Europe together. She met his brother. But as her feelings deepened, she began to sense a distance in him. A disconnect. When she'd say "I love you," he wouldn't respond. Comments about her job resurfaced, little daggers like, "What do you do all day?" and, "The sex is really bad with your clients, right?" But the red flags turned into a warning siren when Rich had a family wedding. He didn't invite Maggie.

"Why not?" she asked him, holding back tears. "Because you don't see me in your future? Why are you hiding me? Keeping me away?"

Rich's gradual 180 isn't a revelation in provider circles. All the women interviewed for this story have encountered guys who say they don't have a problem dating a sex worker. They mean it too. But it's impossible to really know what it's like, how they will react, until they do it. Good intentions don't qualify as actual understanding. Maggie tells the story of a "lovely young man" she briefly dated. When she told him she was an escort, he smiled and replied that it didn't matter what she does; it only matters what kind of person she is. "I thought that was really sweet," says Maggie. "But it's all well and good to say that before you're shoulders deep in a relationship and mama has to go out and blow someone."

Yet that's precisely what dating an escort requires. Recognizing a blow job as a job and nothing more. "I always say to partners, 'I wish you could do this for one day and understand what it's really like,'" says Maggie. "Before I started I had no idea."

That lack of understanding fosters insecurity. Undermines trust. "And you have to trust your partner completely," insists Sara. "And he has to trust you." If those pieces are missing, boyfriends tend to grow resentful while providers feel more and more guilty.

"I felt guilty all the time about work," explains Maggie. Guilty about last-minute bookings, jobs over the holidays, trips out of town. "And I felt like I had to make up for it."

That means lots of mollycoddling. Constantly reassuring boyfriends that they're special, returning from a two-week tour and having sex with your partner, not because you want to but because you feel obligated. Tolerating behaviors that shouldn't be tolerated. "Rich liked things I wasn't so keen on," admits Maggie. "Like spanking really hard. I'd finally say, 'Don't do that—it hurts!'"

Many providers have not only found themselves in unhealthy relationships, but they've also stayed with those partners because they don't think they

"I always say to partners, 'I wish you could do this for one day and understand what it's really like.'"

can find somebody else who would be as accepting of their profession. "We invest so much in our partner because we know we have a special situation," says Maggie. "And we need to compensate for almost everything that happens." Inevitably, Rich couldn't give Maggie the love and support she needed. That she'd explicitly asked him for. Every day was a whirlwind of emotions, from romantic heartbreak to existential mindfuck. "He made me question my job," says Maggie. "People make you feel bad about it because you're just doing it for the money. And that's seen as dirty, you're a slut, easy. I spoke to a therapist about it and she said to me, 'Do you really want a man who's okay with what you do?'"

"True. That's hard!" agrees Josie. "The feminist in me says yes, but the romantic in me says hell no!"

It's all part of the ongoing battle Maggie had spoken of. Battles that are often lost. Finally, one afternoon, she called Rich from her bed, crying. They couldn't go on like this anymore, she said. The relationship was over. They never saw each other again.

"You can't win," she sighed. "I want someone to accept who I am and where I am at this point. Someone to love me for who I am and not what I do. It doesn't define me. But do you still want a man who's okay with you sleeping with other people?"

In January 2018, after two and a half years together, Krista and Vic found themselves in uncharted, unhappy waters. The surprise? The issues didn't have a direct correlation to sex. Time was the first real issue. Krista began landing more jobs, and she'd specifically changed her marketing to attract longer bookings that took her out of both New York City and the United States for significant stretches. When a client is paying hefty sums for meals, dinners, hotels and time, a provider can't just hop on the phone and start texting people. Especially a boyfriend. Not only is it rude, it's bad for business.

"My last trip was five days," explains Krista. "It's like being on a date. I learned to do a lot of fast texting in the bathroom."

Krista and Vic came up with a solution: After a booking with a client in, say, Paris, Vic would join Krista in France and the pair, flush with Krista's cash, would go carousing through Europe. They had a blast. Yet Vic didn't have the same schedule flexibility, and the travel eventually cost him his sales position.

"My income was going up, and he lost his job. It affected his self-esteem," says Krista. "Then we stopped fucking. He didn't want to. Men feel emasculated when they're not working. But if I don't have sex I'll start to break down."

To make matters worse, as the breadwinner, Krista started giving Vic money. To pay his rent, cover his bills, for some spending cash. The female as breadwinner of the American household isn't by any means a new phenomenon, but it can strain any straight relationship, especially when one of the couple has the unusual mindset of a female sex worker. "I had a problem supporting him," she admits. Not because she didn't love Vic, but because she began feeling like a client. Paying for Vic's company. That in turn made her question the nature of their entire relationship. Was it simply transactional? Was she being played? She started to suspect it was all an act, that Vic was only going through the motions for the money.

After an event one night, Krista came home and confronted Vic.

"I don't know if you love me anymore," she claimed. "And what would you do without me supporting you?"

"That's probably true," admitted Vic.

"Okay. This is over."

Not long after Josie had broken it off with Alan from Atlanta, a man in New York City piqued her interest. He was successful and charming, they had similar interests and fantastic chemistry. The sex was off the charts. Josie had been so at ease during their time together that she'd revealed her real name and talked about her "civilian" life. The catch? He was a client. And he'd repeatedly asked to take her on an off-the-clock date.

That wasn't radical in the realm of high-end providers. Many have dated a client at least once, and some say their closest, most honest relationships are with the regulars who pay them. Take Bre, for example, who couldn't be happier with her current significant other, who is not only a former client but is still married and in an open relationship. These clients provide a safe, albeit transactional, space where an escort can let her hair down without being judged or threatened.

So Josie agreed. They had fabulous sushi, sizzling banter and later went back to her place to have sex. But when he spent the night, it felt like, well, work. "He wouldn't leave," laughs Josie. "By the next afternoon, I'm like, 'I'm tired, get the fuck out.'" She gave off clear signals that she wanted solo time, but he refused to read them—a by-product, she thinks, of her job. "It was what he needed to make it feel like it wasn't a transaction," she says.

The disappointment over her client didn't last. Trying out an exclusive dating app, she connected with Simon. Someone, once again, who didn't live in the same city. For the next few months, they spoke every day. Sometimes for hours. "They were some of the most meaningful, in-depth conversations I've ever had," she recalls. "It gave me intimacy, but not the physical form. Emotional."

Before long, Simon was dropping the L-word. But Josie resisted. The two hadn't even met in person, and Josie hadn't revealed she was a sex worker. Yet, like last time, the deeper she got involved with Simon, the more the duplicity gnawed at her. "I feel great about what I do," she says. "It's the double life that makes me feel shitty. It's a constant struggle in this business."

Revealing the truth can be a scary proposition for a provider, especially when that information has been withheld for a long time. But it can also be liberating, it can help a relationship. Suzanne, the escort getting her MBA, vividly remembers the night she told her casual lover—after two years. "I was absolutely terrified. I was shaking," she says. "He said, 'I feel so much closer to you now that I know this about you.'"

Finally, Josie booked a trip to visit Simon. She planned to see him for a few weeks to ensure their face-to-face connection was as powerful as what they'd been feeling for the past six months. Yet two days before she was scheduled to leave, Josie pulled the plug.

"I'm constantly in a conversation with myself because I want to live an honest life," she says with a tinge of frustration. "But what's my truth? Am I seeking these situations because deep down I don't feel worthy of a real relationship?"

The struggles continue. Since splitting with Rich, Maggie has had a string of disappointing dates. Josie has all but given up on love for now, focusing her energy instead on wellness and traveling abroad. "There aren't really any books on how to date

"My last trip was five days.... I learned to do a lot of fast texting in the bathroom."

a hooker," says Suzanne. But what if the laws changed? What if the sex-work industry were legalized? Would the challenges to finding love remain? Maggie is confident they would

"I'd feel safer divulging the information to a partner earlier," she says "But I don't think dating or relationships would be easier. The problem is the patriarchy, regardless of the legalities."

There was, however, one encouraging sign. Krista and Vic, who eventually got a job in the health care industry. "We're back on," she explains. "He's a delightful, beautiful man, and he feels like my partner I see a future together."

The future. That, too, providers have to consider. Escorts don't intend to be in the business forever, as there is normally a shelf life to the job. Relationships are inevitable. That said, most of the providers interviewed for this story aren't imagining themselves as part of some Norman Rockwell narrative

"I know for a fact I'll never have a conventional lifestyle," says Maggie

One of the escorts I spoke with agrees. "Why not go on an hour 'date' once a month?" she replies when asked about continuing to work if she gets married. "Why turn down that money I could put away for savings? I could see myself doing that, but it's kind of hard to gauge now "

Whatever form of relationship they find, what will providers tell their partners of their past lives as sex workers? A few don't intend to say anything. Several envision telling their significant other but underplaying their participation and "leaving out the nitty-gritty," in the words of one provider. Most of them, however, feel like Maggie

"I would be straightforward," she says. "This is going to be a part of me no matter if it's the present or the past. Whoever I wind up with is going to have to be okay with it."

Some names and minor details have been changed for privacy.

DRIPPING IN
SENSUALITY
Serenity Raine
Instagram @Serenity_Rainexo_Official

We're happy to have you feature on Playboy! Can you give us a bit of a background on your career as a model and where it all started? I started modeling five years ago for contortion and aerial arts photo sets which gave me an appreciation and understanding of the art I can create with my body. I began modeling professionally two years ago and have been featured in Playboy spreads, FHM top stars, Makeda magazine and more!

Having a full schedule must make it difficult for you to get much alone time, talk to us about the top 3 must-dos to ensure you fit in some well-deserved downtime. Every day I do something active for myself. This can be as much as a two-hour workout or as little as putting on my favorite playlist and dancing like nobody's watching. Some sort of physical activity is crucial to serving my body and mind every day. I try to carve out time a day or two throughout the week when I can put my phone on "do not disturb" and play video games or watch a movie for a few hours. My final relaxation trick is a bathbomb, a bubble bath, and a good book. I can relax in a warm bath until my fingers turn to prunes!

What does it mean for you to be seen as a strong, intelligent, ambitious woman? As a strong, intelligent, ambitious woman, I chose the things and people that serve me and my happiness.

Life is too short to be held back by something that is serving your life's greater purpose. These decisions can be painful and uncomfortable, but a strong woman can follow through with that choice, an intelligent woman trusts she is making the correct choice and an ambitious woman will continue to chase after her dreams, no matter what. I have grown to trust my judgment and make the uncomfortable, but necessary choices to make my dreams come true.

What are some of the biggest misconceptions people have about what you do? The biggest misconception people have about what I do is that I will work for free. No one should be expected to do that. I make myself available through social media for marketing and reaching fans however there are many people who try to take advantage of that availability. My free time is very valuable so it's a shame when fans don't understand that and get upset that I can not entertain them in my spare time for free. As April Ludgate says in Parks and Recreation, "Time is money, money is power, power is pizza, pizza is knowledge." If they're not paying for my pizza, then they better let me watch Parks and Rec in peace.

What does freedom of self-expression mean to you? To me, there is a huge difference when someone is creating because they HAVE to vs. someone creating because they WANT to. The freedom of self-expression comes from the heart, it is when a creative WANTS to express their art. We all start the journey of self-expression because there is so much freedom behind it, but once that becomes monetized the passion tends to fizzle out and you're no longer creating because you love to. This is something that happens to every creative, even myself. When I am producing a show I sometimes find myself hating the songs in my act after a while or frustrated with dancing. Whenever this happens I put on a song that is different from anything I'd perform to, I shut my eyes and I dance for myself. The freedom of self-expression is why any person pursues art, but that freedom is something that needs to be nourished and protected.

We absolutely love your Instagram, your content is very dynamic, inspirational, and downright sexy, could you perhaps tell us what your personal experience as an influencer has been like? My experience as an influencer has unfortunately been a little frustrating. I have had my account suspended and deleted over four times in the last year. Most social media platforms are not friendly to our industry and it can make it difficult to navigate as a content creator. However, I have never let this discourage me. I learn each time, develop more creative marketing strategies, and push forward!

Things that you can't go a day without. Coffee, cuddling with my dog (*which makes traveling so hard!*) and laughter.

What about those crazy DMs you must receive? Care to share a few funny stories regarding those? At one point I actually created an entire Instagram page dedicated to crazy DMs. I would create a graphic that made it look like an inspirational quote and the juxtaposition of the graphic and the quote were always hysterical. One of my favorites that I dedicated a post to was a DM I had that read "I'd eat dog food out of that ass." I of course never responded. Two years later I received another DM from the same man, "I'd eat dog food out of that ass." It's honestly a great opening line and I appreciate the dedication.

Now we're sure you experience a lot of male attention on and offline, any advice you would like to give to men out there who are hoping to catch your eye the right way? Make me laugh. It is honestly that simple, of course, I want someone who is passionate, creative, and chasing their own goals and dreams. As a dreamer who works tirelessly to make their dreams a reality, there's not much sexier than a man who is also chasing dreams of their own. However, at the end of the day, I am a silly, goofy person. I need someone who can "yes, and" my bits and make me laugh so hard I awkwardly snort. The best way to my heart is quick with a good sense of humor.

What is the absolute worst thing a man can do to completely put you off? When a man is self-absorbed it is a huge turn-off. I want to surround myself with people who have a desire to learn and grow as individuals. If a man already thinks he is all that and a box of vegan chocolates he is not going to be an enjoyable person to explore life with. The best and most interesting people on the planet don't feel the need to talk

about how great and interesting they are. Don't ever forget that.

That said, what advice would you have to give to all women out there when it comes to love and relationships? Never settle. It is better to be alone than in the wrong relationship. This is advice for every person, you deserve a partner that will give you the world and someone you want to give the world to. If you feel like you're consistently dating people who aren't matching what you want out of life, take some time and date yourself. Know your worth so strongly that no cute smile can persuade you otherwise.

Thank you so much for sitting down with us and letting us get to know you! Any last words for our readers out there? Never stop striving for greatness. Honor the things and relationships that serve you in life and be aware of what takes your peace. You are worthy and deserving of a happy successful life, sometimes you just change your perspective and surroundings to get there.

Playboy Advisor How Do I Unlock the Pleasure of the Prostate?

Playboy's resident male sexpert, Bobby Box, is here to drop some carnal knowledge on the ever-elusive prostate orgasm.

BY **BOBBY BOX** PHOTO BY **LANA VESHTA**

Q: *I'm a 27-year-old woman in a heterosexual relationship, and I would like to bring up the topic of prostate play to my partner. He's pretty sexually open-minded, and we've talked a few times about exploring beyond penis-in-vagina penetration. What's the best way to communicate my curiosity in prostate play without scaring him or making him feel uncomfortable? —T.L.,*

You mention your man is sexually open-minded, so approach the conversation casually—don't plan a speech or anything. It's 2020, and butt stuff is finally being acknowledged in the mainstream as a legitimate source of sexual pleasure, even among heterosexual men who've been under the impression that anal play is "gay." This belief system, of course, has homophobic roots, and it isn't a cute look on anyone. The prostate is a gland, not a sexual orientation.

A survey from sex toy manufacturer LELO found that 71 percent of straight men in relationships have tried, or would like to try, prostate play, and 80 percent of women are open to sharing in that experience. Since men who incorporate prostate play into their sexual routine can experience orgasms up to 33 percent stronger, this has potential to be a total game changer and a fun way to mix up the dynamics in your sexual relationship.

Of course, consent is what's most important here, so whatever you do, do not shove a finger up his unexpecting ass. This will effectively diminish any future attempts at anal play. Instead, start by complimenting his bum. Playfully pinch or squeeze it when you're together. His reaction will help you get a better sense of his comfort level.

The next time you're chatting (in person or through text) and the conversation gets hot and heavy, throw out the idea that you'd like to try something—something you think he would really enjoy. (Knock on the back door before opening it, if you will.) Ask if he'd be open to butt play and tell him how hot you think it would be. If he knows the idea turns you on, he may be more receptive to being ..receptive.

If his cues are positive, you can start by stimulating the prostate externally through the perineum—the swath of skin between the balls and the b-hole—the next time you're intimate. Next time you're giving him a blow job, gently rub the area (it will feel like a plum) in a circular motion and gauge his reaction. It's a noninvasive way to test the waters and, provided he's loving this new trick, will further open his mind and his cheeks to a well-lubed finger (trim your nails prior!) or a toy, such as a prostate massager.

If he's not receptive, don't force it on him. Sex is best when all parties are actively enthusiastic about what's taking place.

Q: *I'm a freshly out-of-the-closet gay male in my early 30s, and I've never experienced an anal orgasm or prostate orgasm. I would like to experiment alone before I engage with a partner, and I wanted to know if you had any tips for the best toys or lubes to use for stimulation? What is the safest way to go solo? —S.P.,*

As somebody who came out in his late 20s, I can totally relate to your experience. Truth be told, it took me some time before I was completely comfortable with anal sex—and it took even longer until I became confident.

I think it's a great idea to experiment with anal sex toys before engaging in penetrative partnered sex. It helps you get to know your body at a rate you're comfortable with without the pressure of rushing into anything.

The anal sex toy market is expansive and can be overwhelming, but the category can effectively be summed up in four parts: butt plugs, prostate massagers, anal beads and dilation kits. All have their own merits and only through trial and error can you decide which is best for you.

Before paying for a sex toy, however, I suggest you explore your prostate with your fingers and discover which sensations feel best. Enter about three or four inches in your rectum with a lubricated finger and gently play around in the area. The prostate has a distinct texture (like a soft walnut) and you'll know when you've hit it. Many say prostate massage feels like the begin-

ning of an orgasm. If you feel a sudden urge to urinate, you may be applying too much pressure. The sensations you enjoy during this time can offer valuable intel when purchasing a sex toy. Also, it's free!

Since you say you've never experienced an anal or prostate orgasm, I recommend you start with a dilation kit. These are a series of anal sex toys—often butt plugs—of graduated sizes designed to get your bum accustomed to anal play at a comfortable pace.

When you feel like moving to the next toy in the set (which is slightly larger), insert a finger alongside your current toy first. If the finger slides in without resistance, that's your green light to upsize. If it's uncomfortable, stick with the current toy for another day or two. Your body will let you know when it's ready.

If your goal is to experience a prostate orgasm, prostate massagers have an intentional curve designed to directly stimulate the prostate. They also tend to have fun vibration settings for added stimulation. I recommend the LELO Hugo or LOKI Wave, the latter of which is the first prostate massager to offer the beloved "come hither" motion that's largely favored for prostate play.

Now let's talk lube, which is absolutely necessary when using sex toys. Water-based lubes are the most versatile of the bunch and can be used with a wide spectrum of materials. However, they don't last as long as other lubricants and you will likely have to reapply, which can be a pain in the butt (wink). If you do opt for a water-based lube, choose a thick or gel-based formula, as they tend to last longer. Try Tush Cush by Cake, which is a water-based jelly made specifically for butt-stuff beginners.

Silicone-based lubes are longer-lasting and largely favored for anal sex because of their silky texture and glide. If you choose a silicone lube (Cake's Backside Slide is my go-to) don't use it with silicone sex toys, as it can deteriorate the material.

Hybrid lubes (see: Ride Silk Hybrid) are another fine option. These are largely water-based lubricants made with a small amount of silicone so you can get the desired texture that silicone lubes offer while being able to use them with silicone sex toys.

Lastly, you can also use an oil-based lube, which is the longest lasting but also the most difficult to clean. Though you may not be using barriers with your sex toys, it's important to note that oil-based lubes are not condom compatible, nor should they be used with plastic or latex toys.

Q: *I enjoy being a recipient of prostate play in my relationship, but I have yet to orgasm from it even though I find it highly pleasurable. Is it normal to never experience a p-orgasm despite being comfortable and aroused? Is there something I could be doing differently? —G G*

What may be occurring here is that you are experiencing a prostate orgasm, but not seeing any "evidence" of it in the form of ejaculate. This is fairly common. Prostate orgasms can occur in the absence of ejaculation—some refer to these as "dry orgasms." Another thing about prostate orgasms: They can happen over and over again with no grace period. Many have multiple orgasms without seeing any semen at all. Because you mention you're comfortable and find the experience highly pleasurable, this could be what's happening.

Beyond that, I want to emphasize that we should stop being so goal-oriented about sex. An orgasm does not a sexually gratifying experience make! When we approach sex with a goal in mind (e.g. orgasm) it can suck the fun out of the experience. As the saying goes, "Life is about the journey, not the destination."

If an orgasm does happen, great. If it doesn't, no biggie. Did you have fun? Did it feel good? That's all that matters. We get so caught up in these arbitrary rules that it can take us out of the experience and leave us feeling guilty. Sex is about pleasure, not

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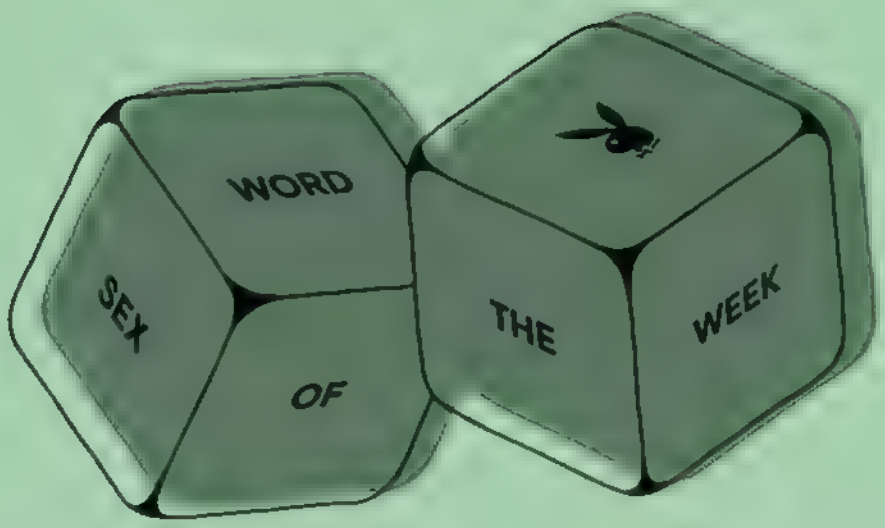
shame! That being said, if you think the issue could be that your prostate is not being stimulated in a way that brings you to orgasm, there are a few things you can try

Try stimulating the prostate externally, then internally Try both at the same time (though you will likely need a toy to do this). Some find it easier to experience a prostate orgasm while they're stroking their shaft

Next, play around with how you're touching your prostate, applying different pressure. Try the "come hither" motion, then try some gentle taps. Try tracing around the entire gland in circles, and try a vibrator You may find that one technique or a combination of many is what it takes to produce a prostate orgasm. You can even change your positioning: You can enter doggy style, on your back, lying on your side and so on Lift your leg or place a pillow under your hips if it helps. There is no one universal way to have a prostate orgasm, but it can be a lot of fun finding out which techniques work best for you



CannaSexual

WRITTEN BY
ASHLEY MANTA

ILLUSTRATIONS BY
KATIE BAILIE

If your libidinous mind can imagine it, there's probably already a term for it

CannaSexual (*adj*) describing a methodology centered around mindfully and deliberately combining sex and cannabis to deepen intimacy and enhance pleasure, whether solo or partnered; (*n*) a person who practices such methodology

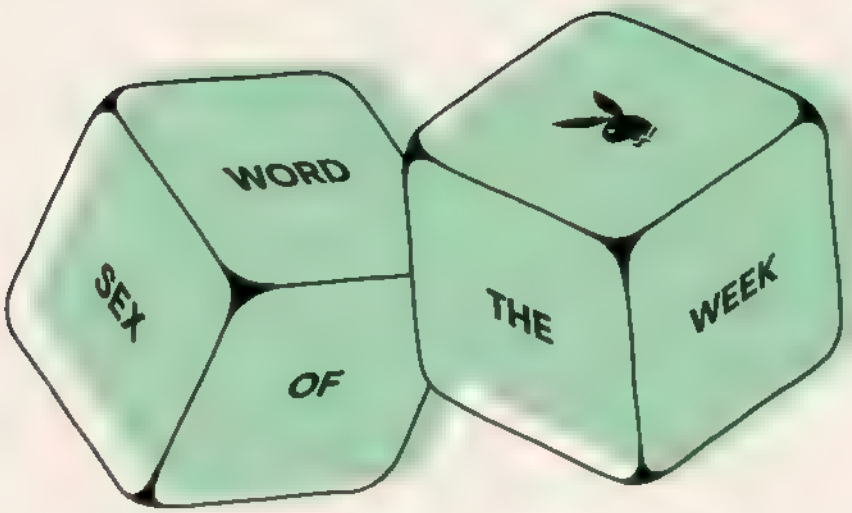
"I want to use cannabis with my partner to improve our sex life, but I don't know where to start!" 'Have you tried the CannaSexual approach? It's all about using cannabis intentionally to spark your pleasure!"

CannaSexual was coined in 2014 by award-winning sex and relationship coach Ashley Manta, who has become a leading expert on the intersection of sex and cannabis. The CannaSexual method is intended to be consent-focused, queer-inclusive and trauma-informed. It advocates consuming any new cannabis products solo, then masturbating, to determine how the products impact the user's experience.

For couples, the directive is to "negotiate before you medicate," which means to discuss boundaries, desires and intentions before consuming any cannabis-infused products. Partners should include what products are being used and in what amounts, how to tell if one has over-consumed and how each person wishes to be taken care of if overconsumption occurs.

CannaSexual also highlights that consumers may enjoy the positive impact of cannabis on sexual experiences without intoxication, and encourages the use of topicals and CBD-rich products.

Manta, who has become known as "The CannaSexual," is the cofounder of the Sex and Cannabis Professional Alliance and the author of The CBD Solution: Sex, which will be published September 22. As a sexual violence survivor, she speaks candidly about the many ways in which cannabis products have helped her manage her PTSD symptoms and allowed her to discover greater embodiment and presence in her sexual explorations.



Sumata

WRITTEN BY
ANITA LITTLE

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KATIE BAILIE

If your libidinous mind can imagine it, there's probably already a term for it

sumata (*n*) a form of nonpenetrative sex where the penis is rubbed between the thighs or the labia majora

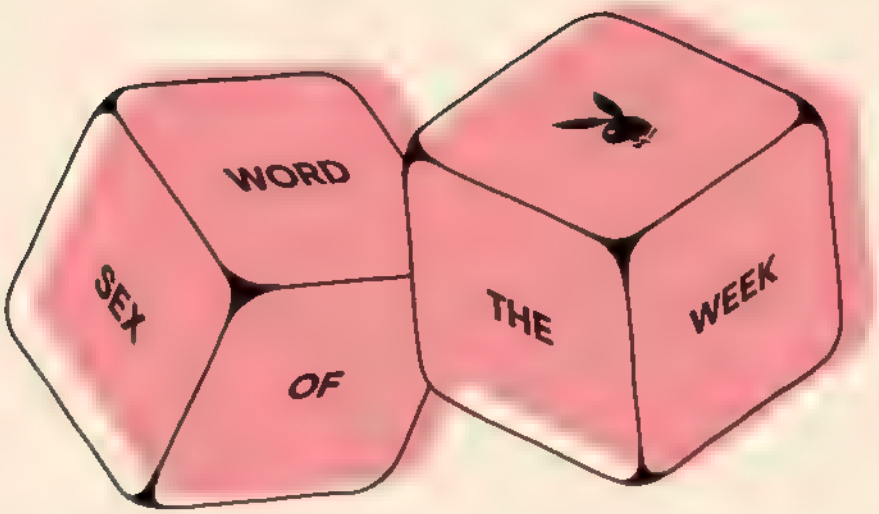
She placed their penis against her labia and began to rock back and forth rhythmically, knowing sumata always quickly led to a climax.

Slowly but surely, we're inching (ha) toward a society where sex isn't defined as a penis repeatedly going in and out of a vagina. It's for the greater pleasure of everyone, since decentering good ol' penis-in-vagina sex means our bedroom conversations can better include self-partnered people, nonhetero people, trans people, people with physical limitations and so on. One way of doing this is by taking a closer look at all the titillating forms of nonpenetrative sex out there.

So let's talk about getting in between the legs—no, literally, only between the legs. Sumata, more formally known as intercrural sex and more informally known as a pussy job, is the act of creating friction between the thighs or outer labia until climax is reached. Despite the act's many names and supposed origins, the specific term sumata is Japanese and is typically used in the context of brothels. Sumata was seen as a way for sex workers to skirt anti–sex work laws that forbade the exchange of sexual intercourse for money.

Sumata can be great for penis owners, since, with the help of lube, the repetitive gliding motion stimulates the head and the shaft. It can be amazing for vagina-havers as well, since the thrusting motion happens externally against the clitoris, with its 8,000 nerve endings.

For those wanting to practice safer sex or avoid unwanted pregnancy, this form of outercourse can provide stimulation with much less risk. So if you want to explore new sensations in new ways, work some sumata into your sex-positions Rolodex!



Shrimping

WRITTEN BY
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If your libidinous mind can imagine it, there's probably already a term for it

shrimping (*v*) the act of erotically licking or sucking on a partner's toes

Kara slowly moisturized her toes and feet as Joseph hungrily watched—eager for yet another shrimping session

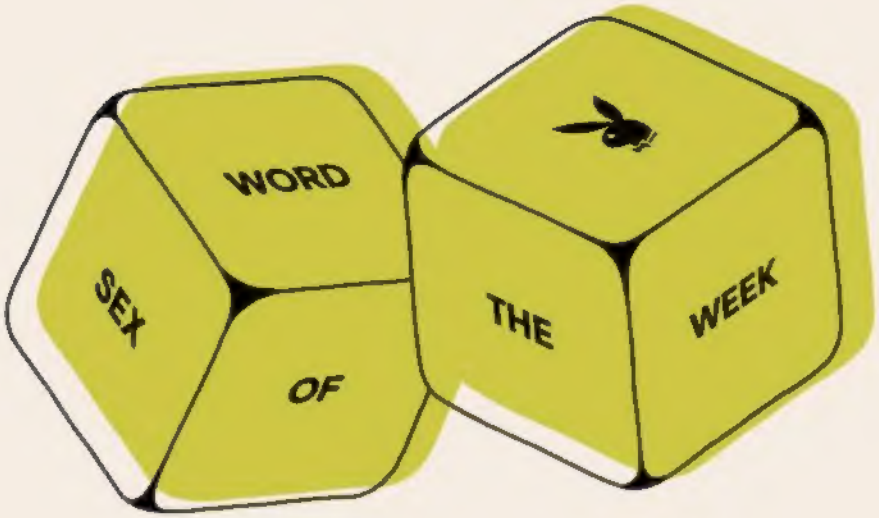
Let's talk about going down on someone. Nope, not that. Going all the way down on someone. Feet fetishes aren't anything new. There's an entire class of adult performers who have built careers on their cute feet and have given the phrase m"working on your feet all day" a way spicier meaning. In addition to poring over photos and videos, another part of foot worship is shrimping, which refers to sucking and licking someone's toes. And yes, the name gets its inspiration from the shape of the human toe

The shrimper gets off on the submissive act of having someone's foot in their mouth, and the person being shrimped is aroused by the sensation of a tongue delicately moving between their toes. The skin on toes and feet is more sensitive than the rest of the body (especially for you ticklish people out there), and all those extra nerve endings can make the deed extremely pleasurable for the recipient. Everyone wins!

In terms of rhythm, shrimping can operate similarly to a blow job, starting out slow at the tips and working your way to the base of the toes, doing a swirling motion with your tongue. And one can't underestimate the usefulness of hands! Don't be afraid to start off with a sensual foot massage before really diving in

Needless to say, make sure your feet are squeaky clean. Maybe even make bathing and scrubbing each other part of your pre-shrimping ritual

Regardless of whether you make shrimping part of foreplay or the main event, there's no shame in the toe-sucking game.



Retifism

WRITTEN BY
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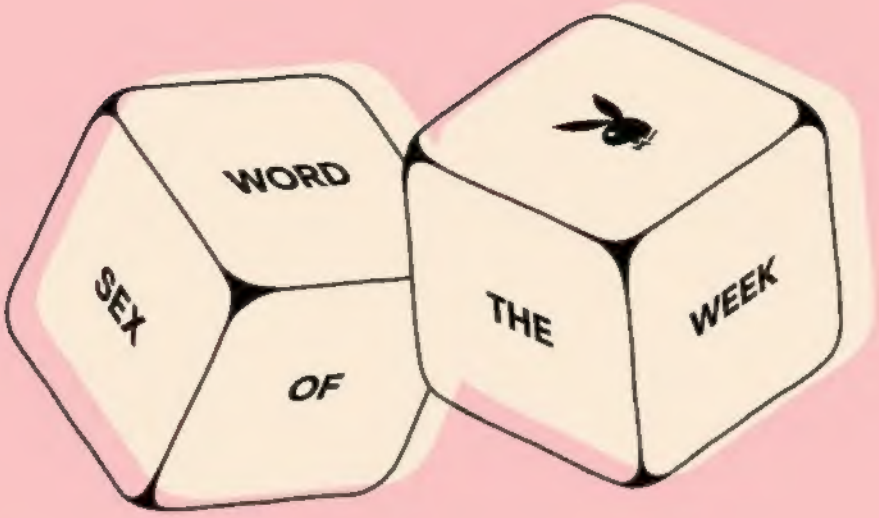
If your libidinous mind can imagine it, there's probably already a term for it

retifism (*n*) a sexual attraction to footwear

Most of his friends assumed John's trips to the strip club were due to his love of the dancers, but actually his retifism had him focused on shiny, strappy high heels all night.

High heels: A source of pain and discomfort for some, a feat (see what I did there?) of footwear engineering for others—and a source of sexual obsession for a few. Since we did a deep dive on toe-sucking last week, why not introduce another element of foot worship? Retifism, aka shoe fetishism, is a wide-encompassing term, but it typically refers to the erotic interest in women's shoes, particularly heels. (But if you happen to get off to a pair of rugby cleats or some Air Force 1 beaters, then more power to you.) The term comes from 18th century French writer and libertine Nicolas Edme Restif de la Bretonne, who was known for his sexual preoccupation with shoes and eventually had his literature focusing on the subject removed from libraries.

High heels are already coded as sexy. The popular musical comedy Kinky Boots didn't come out of nowhere. From sex work to entertainment, the high heel has often served as a shorthand for female sexual dominance. Imagine the stiletto: The arch of a foot in a stiletto reminds one of the way feet curl during orgasm, and the towering six-inch heel reads as nothing but phallic. Not to mention the straps, ties and buckles trigger a certain BDSM sensibility. Retifism simply takes this cultural programming a step further and turns the shoe itself into the primary sex object instead of the person occupying it. So the next time you twitch at the sight of a pair of red-bottoms sashaying down the sidewalk, know you're in good company.



Benzocaine

WRITTEN BY
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ILLUSTRATIONS BY
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If your libidinous mind can imagine it, there's probably already a term for it

benzocaine (*n*) a mild topical anesthetic increasingly used to combat penile overstimulation and delay ejaculation

Eric felt himself getting closer with each thrust and, hoping to prolong the fun, did a quick rubdown with a benzocaine wipe.

If you're a penis-haver, you've probably dealt with not lasting as long as you would like. Although it can be distressing to talk about openly, premature ejaculation is more common than people realize: According to the Mayo Clinic, as many as one out of three men have faced this problem. Various methods have been devised to delay climax, including the squeezing technique and starting and stopping—both forms of edging, which we've talked about before.

Now there's an increasingly popular way to control ejaculation with the use of numbing agents. Benzocaine has traditionally been used as a topical pain reliever to alleviate toothaches, soothe sore throats and treat earaches. It works by temporarily blocking nerve endings at the surface of the skin, meaning it's less likely to respond to outside stimuli. Eventually, a genius in a lab coat realized the application this could have for delaying ejaculation. A pivotal 2017 study in The Journal of Urology showed that wipes treated with benzocaine helped manage premature ejaculation when compared to a placebo. The wipes were shown to temper sensation and sustain pleasure, meaning folks could get more mileage out of their bedroom romps. If arriving to the party too early (cough cough) is a barrier to you or your partners, employing benzocaine wipes can ensure you arrive fashionably late.

Note: Playboy promotes Playboy Intimate Wipes, which contain benzocaine, on Pleasureforall.com. Playboy receives proceeds from the sales of these products.

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